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THE OWL'S NEST IN THE CITY.

CHAPTER XII.

"If we do meet again, why we shall smile;  
If not, why then this parting was well made."—SHAKESPEARE.

"Fire that is closest kept burns most of all."—*Ibid.*

POOR Dick sat silent and with head bowed down during Miss McGregor's recital of this sad history, every word of which, whether relating to the past or the present, must have been exquisitely painful to him. When she concluded, he again thanked her for her championship of his sister, and then said, "Can any of you give me any clue, however slight, by which to trace her? My first duty now is to seek her out and bring her here, so that she may be under this dear lady's safeguard and protection."

"Pardon me, Cornet Prescott," said Miss McGregor, rising haughtily, "that is a charge I cannot undertake. I shall have done my duty when I have placed your mother's will in your hands. I hope sincerely, for your sake, that you may succeed in detaching your sister from her present course of life; but it is utterly impossible that I should lend my support or countenance to her in any way. I intend to return at once to Scotland. It is really not to be expected," she added, seeing Dick about to speak, "that I should remain under the same roof with Miss Prescott after what has occurred."

"For God's sake do not say so," said Dick, eagerly; "remember her position; she is worse than an orphan; you are her only female relation, and if you forsake her—for one fault—who can save her?"

"Sir, it is not *my* duty to save her. I, who have lived all my life far removed from the very breath of contamination, am in no way responsible for her."

"Dear madam," said I, "surely some responsibility weighs upon all those who were instrumental in forcing on that fatal marriage, which has brought nothing but misery and wretchedness to all concerned. I know that the world's judgment goes with you in these

things ; but for us, who have seen the results face to face, is there no other view ? have there not been enough victims already to what, after all, was not family virtue, but family pride ?" And I looked meaningly at Dick.

Her glance followed mine, and she replied uneasily, "I do not defend the course taken on that occasion. I do not deny that I have repented my share in bringing about that unhappy marriage, since I have been an eye-witness to the misery it has produced ; but that is no reason——"

"Yes, yes, it is a reason for pity at least, if not for absolution," said Dick. "Ask yourself, dear madam,—if my poor sister had been brought up in a happy home, the loved and cherished daughter of parents loving and honouring each other, would she have come to this ? I do not presume to speak to you either of responsibility or duty ; it is charity, Christian charity. I implore you," he added, kneeling down before her and gently taking both her hands, "on my knees I implore you to save her."

Miss McGregor was silent.

"Upon my life, Dick's in the right, madam," said St. John ; "it is a case of Christian charity ; I am a very poor hand at religion, but hang it, you know, we are all Christians. Don't you say yourself now, that you are not satisfied with your own part in bringing all this mischief about ? Well, then, does not our Saviour say that unless we are quite clear ourselves, we have no business to be pitching stones at other people ? Oh, I dare say I am not exactly right as to the words," he continued, seeing Miss McGregor looked somewhat disturbed at this new reading ; "I know very well I'm no parson, but the deuce is in it if that is not the idea."

"Yes, Captain St. John, that is the idea," said Miss McGregor very gravely, "and I begin to be afraid you are a better Christian than myself. Cornet Prescott, I *will* wait here, and I will receive and strive to teach your poor sister to the best of my humble power."

Dick kissed her hand with passionate gratitude as he rose from his knees, but he did not speak. I think he could not. There was a pause of a few moments, after which he said again,—

"Has anyone any clue ?"

"I fear I have," I answered, reluctantly ; and I then related as mild a version as possible of Miss Prescott's flirtation with the gentleman who had been in the habit of meeting her at chapel, and also the far more significant fact of my having seen them walking together arm in arm, on the very day of our departure for T—. "That young man first saw her at the chapel," I said, "so he is probably a Catholic, and, if so, Father Louis might help us to discover his name."

"Beauchamp of the ——th is a Catholic," said St. John, "and I have often heard him talk of going with some of his friends to high mass at that very chapel, because there were always so many pretty

girls there. Now that Lovel is here, we may safely leave Miss McGregor, Dick," he continued; "so if you like, I'll go and see after Beauchamp, while you find out Father Louis, and after that we can meet at my rooms and compare notes."

This plan was at once agreed upon. I was able to give a most minute personal description of one upon whom my jealous, angry eyes had so often been fixed; and I also remembered that upon one occasion I had seen him leave the chapel in a very elegant carriage, and that the servants' livery was so peculiar that I could describe it exactly.

"If we find out where they are," said Dick, "I shall follow them at once, wherever it may be; so good-bye, Ned."

He shook hands with Miss McGregor and me, with even more than his usual warmth, and then turned to leave the room. Was it only an affectionate impulse, or was it presentiment, that caused him suddenly to turn back at the door and kiss me? I have often thanked God since, for that last kiss.

"I shall stick by him, you know," said St. John; "and I'll take care to let you know our doings."

We both thanked him heartily for the promise, and felt much relieved to think Dick would have the comfort of his society and sympathy.

Two or three moments later, we saw them cross the court together. St. John looked back, and waved his hand encouragingly to us; but Dick passed out of sight under the dark archway without looking round.

Miss McGregor and I remained standing at the window without speaking, oppressed with sad memories and sad forebodings, from which we were roused by the unexpected entrance of old Withers, with the eternal broom. She came close up to us as if she had something to say, and then turned away again without speaking, and moved towards the door. Miss McGregor glanced uneasily at me, as if for an explanation, but seeing I had none to give, said,—

"Well, Betty Withers, have you anything to say?"

"Didn't neither of you notice nothing particular about Dick?" said Withers.

"Nothing," said Miss McGregor; "unless indeed you mean, in the midst of such affliction, his remarkable calmness and self-command."

"Remarkable fiddlestick," said the old woman, testily; "I tell you that quietness ain't in nature."

"What do you mean, Withers?" said I.

"Mean! I mean that ain't our Dick, that ain't; if they was the last words I had to speak, I tell you you've seen the dead alive." So saying she left the room.

"Really, Mr. Lovel, we must get some other person in the house as servant," said Miss McGregor. "I begin to be afraid there may have been some truth in what Mr. Earle said. Perhaps the old woman

does really drink ; did you notice how very strange she looked just now, and how pale ?”

“ I think she does indulge a little at times,” replied I, with a guilty recollection of the black teapot ; “ but I will go downstairs and speak to some of the clerks about sending in a proper person to wait upon you. It is a great pity Mr. Earle sent away the girl that was here.”

I found that one of the under clerks had a sister who would be glad to come and wait on Miss McGregor for the liberal wages I offered, and having sent him to fetch her, I returned and sat for some time with Miss McGregor in the deserted sitting-room. I remember that we each of us took up a book, though I do not think either of us read much.

Day rapidly declined, but the darkness that came upon us could not add much to the gloom of our thoughts, and neither of us offered to light the lamp. At length Miss McGregor broke the oppressive silence by saying, “ It is nearly two hours past dinner time ; had you not better ring ?”

Feeling for the handle of the bell in the dark, I rang so loudly, without intending it, that the bell sounded through the house like an alarm. It was not answered, however, and I rang again.

Still no Betty Withers appeared. I felt my old nervousness coming over me, and I am almost ashamed to relate that, unwilling to go upstairs alone in search of the delinquent, I said to Miss McGregor, “ Shall we go and see what is the matter ?”

Perhaps she herself preferred company at that moment, for she rose directly, lighted a candle, and, putting it into my hands, drew her shawl round her ready to follow.

How silent and ghostly the old house seemed I cannot say. “ Let us look after my uncle first,” I said, less, I fear, from benevolence towards him than from a cowardly wish to delay going up the darksome stairs. We opened the door of his room. It really seemed almost cheerful in comparison with the rest of the house. My poor uncle was placidly smoking his pipe by the side of the fire, and a tray of meat and wine was by his side.

“ Have you dined, uncle ?” I said, in some surprise.

“ Hours and hours ago,” he replied. “ I have been hard at work ever since,” he added, smiling (not a paper or pen had been touched), “ and I shall have everything quite ready by the time James comes home.”

“ That’s right !” I answered, relieved to be met with a smile, however imbecile, in that mournful dwelling, over which a curse appeared to hang. Miss McGregor stood waiting for me at the half-open door. Something of my own nervousness appeared to affect even her, though usually so composed and strong-minded, for drawing her shawl round her with a sort of shudder, she said, “ Upon my word it seems as if the happiest fate that can befall one in this place is to turn silly.”



"My uncle certainly looks happier now than I ever remember him, but——"

Miss McGregor suddenly clutched my arm as I spoke, and uttered a low cry of terror. One of the uncomfortable panel doors, of the existence of which she was ignorant, opened, and Mr. Earle unexpectedly stood before us in the opening.

He seemed surprised to see us there, but he bowed politely to Miss McGregor, and said,—

"I have ventured to return for the sake of the business, for hearing that Dick had gone, I felt I should be safe."

"Safe!" retorted I; "you are certainly safe enough from everything but contempt."

"These are harsh words, Ned, towards one who at least never did you any harm, though you did not scruple to play the spy on him," he answered, coldly.

"Oh! if you would like to see some of your handiwork, you have only to look here," said I, opening the door of Mr. Prescott's room again.

Earle advanced a step forward, and fixed his eyes earnestly on my uncle, who was leaning back in his chair gazing at the fire, and softly rubbing his hands, the very picture of contented imbecility.

Presently he raised his eyes, and on seeing his partner standing in the doorway, he said to him in a tone of voice and manner the very reverse of his former gloomy and morose bearing: "Ah, Earle, how do you do? I am hard at work, you see; the documents are nearly ready, and you will be surprised to see the start things will take when James comes back. He will soon set everything to rights."

"Good God! this is dreadful indeed," said Earle, in a low voice. "How long has he been like this?"

"Ever since the funeral."

"Then how dare you say it is my work!" he exclaimed, fiercely.

"All the misery and wretchedness in this wretched house is your work," I answered, turning away from him. "Now, madam, shall we go upstairs?" I said to Miss McGregor.

She took my arm in silence, and we went upstairs, and passed the dark doorways of the empty rooms that used so to awe me when I was a child, together. The kitchen fire was out, but by the light of our candle we saw old Withers sitting in her accustomed chair, with the teapot I knew so well by her side. Her mouth and eyes were wide open; the black cap lay upon the ground by her side, and a few elf locks of long tangled grey hair straggled upon her shoulders in forlorn and pitiful disorder. I spoke to her twice, but received no answer. Miss McGregor then went forward and touched her.

"My God, she is stone cold!" she exclaimed. "Can she be dead?"

"She is dead, indeed," said Mr. Earle, who had followed us; "and I should think," he added, taking the old woman's rigid hand in his,

"that she must have been dead some hours. When did you last see her?"

"Oh! at least four hours ago," answered Miss McGregor, looking at her watch.

"Do you remember her last words?" I whispered.

"I do, indeed," she said, shuddering; "but we must not be superstitious, Mr. Lovel."

At this moment we were startled by a loud ringing at the outer door of the upper hall, and on going downstairs to answer it, we found St. John's groom waiting with a letter for me.

While Mr. Earle went to seek for a surgeon to certify as to the cause of old Withers' death, and to make arrangements for the decent removal of the body, I took the letter from the servant, and desiring him to wait, followed Miss McGregor into the sitting-room to read its contents. It was evidently written in great haste, and was as follows:—

"DEAR NED,

"I have found it all out, through Beauchamp. It was the fellow you suspected, Viscount L——. They have gone to Italy; Beauchamp thinks to Nice, but it will be very easy to find out. We are off by the mail train, as, of course, Dick must either make him marry her, or fight him. I will write again through Johnson when I have anything to say.

"Get Miss M. away from X Court, for if Earle finds out that Dick's gone, she won't be safe. I have told Johnson to consider himself her servant till I get back.

"Yours ever,

"B. ST JOHN."

I put the letter into Miss McGregor's hands, but she had only read the first lines when she let it fall in dismay, and sinking on the sofa with a face as pale as death, exclaimed,—

"Oh, Mr. Lovel, this is worse than all! There is not an instant to be lost; you must follow them at once to prevent this dreadful duel."

"It is dreadful, indeed, that Dick should risk his life for one so utterly unworthy of it," I said; "but indeed, dear madam, there is no help for it. As St. John says, he must fight."

"No, no,—it is not that, it is not the danger—though Heaven knows that is dreadful enough. God help us all, they are brothers! Viscount L—— is Lord M.'s son. Would you have Dick fight his own brother? and for his sister, too? Oh! it is too horrible!"

For a moment I stood speechless: my senses appeared to forsake me, and I scarcely realised the full meaning of her words. I was roused by the entrance of Mr. Earle, and Miss McGregor, who had not read that part of St. John's letter which related to him, started up and putting it into his hands, said: "You must find a means of

stopping this duel. If there be murder between these brothers, their blood will be upon your head."

Even Earle turned pale as he read the letter.

"It is not too late—Lovel must go after them at once," he said, "and tell them the truth. But they may not believe it on our bare word. You must get a line to Viscount L—— from Lord M—— himself. If you tell him all the facts, and who *all* the parties are," he added, with his old sneer, "his affectionate and paternal heart will surely render him anxious to prevent further mischief—not to speak of the scandal, for *we* would take care to make the thing known. It would only be poetical justice, though, to let his punishment fall upon him through Dick," he said, smiling grimly.

"Who can tell that Dick himself would not be the victim?" said I. "God knows he has always been so hitherto, thanks to you."

"Mr. Lovel, do not let us lose time in reproaches," said Miss McGregor. "Let us both go at once to Lord M——. Is there no blue book in the house to look out his address?"

"St. John's man is pretty sure to know where he lives," said I, calling him in.

He knew that it was in Curzon Street, and said he could point out the house though he could not remember the number. I therefore sent him at once for a cab, in which Miss McGregor and I started immediately for Mayfair. Johnson, who had evidently taken his master's orders about Miss McGregor to heart, mounted the box.

On arriving at Lord M——'s, we found the house brilliantly lighted up, and the porter who opened the door assured us that it was quite impossible we could see the earl that night, as he was entertaining a large party of friends at dinner.

"I do not intend to go away without seeing him," said Miss McGregor with imperturbable dignity. "Send word to his lordship that we have bad news to give him. Viscount L—— is in great danger."

After hesitating a moment longer, the man showed us into the library and said, "As soon as ever I can speak to the butler, madam, I will see what can be done."

"We are in no hurry," replied Miss McGregor, seating herself with the air of an empress; "but for the earl's own sake, you had better not lose any time."

The man bowed and left us.

We had formed no plan together as to who should speak, nor what we were to say, but from the moment we entered the house Miss McGregor had shown herself so decidedly the master spirit, that I instinctively left the whole matter in her hands.

It may have been a quarter of an hour, it seemed to me an age before Lord M—— came into the library. I was very anxious to see him, and eagerly looked to trace some resemblance to Dick. He was a tall handsome man, still in the prime of life, and physically there was

certainly a striking likeness between them, but the expression of Lord M——'s face was cold, selfish, and reserved. He appeared annoyed at what he probably thought an intrusion, but he bowed slightly to Miss McGregor, as he said: "My servant tells me you have something to communicate with regard to my son, Viscount L——. May I request you to state it in as few words as possible, as I am much engaged?"

"I am here, my lord, to give you the means of, it may be, saving the life of Viscount L——,"—the earl started—"and to do this, I must claim for a few moments your best attention."

"I am at your service, madam," he answered, taking a chair.

Miss McGregor then related her story in a few simple, severe words, and the earl, though he never lost his self-possession, evidently listened with painful interest.

"This is indeed a most unhappy business," he said, at length. "Of course I will give this gentleman—since he is good enough to undertake the journey—the letter you require, to put an end to this foolish affair. The danger to the unfortunate young man in whom you are interested is even greater than you suppose. My boy is a first-rate shot."

"To which of your lordship's boys does your lordship allude?" said Miss McGregor, coldly.

The earl bit his lip, but did not reply. He seated himself at his desk, and in a few moments wrote a letter to Viscount L——, which he put into my hands. We then rose to depart, and with more of feeling in his tone than I had yet detected, Lord M——, said: "Whatever be the motive for your interference in this matter, allow me to thank you for having thus placed it in my power to prevent further mischief."

"You have nothing to thank me for, my lord," said I; "your lordship's interest in this matter is for Viscount L——; my interest is exclusively concentrated upon your lordship's *eldest* son."

The earl rang the bell without answering this thrust, and bowed haughtily to Miss McGregor as we left the room, without bestowing any further notice on me.

When we were again seated in the cab, St. John's servant touched his hat to Miss McGregor, and said: "My master desired me to advise you to sleep at the — Hotel to-night, madam: shall I tell the man to drive there?"

I earnestly entreated Miss McGregor to agree to this arrangement, for I felt the truth of St. John's words that she was not safe at X Court. She unwillingly consented, and after leaving her at the hotel, I returned home with Johnson in order to send her her boxes. We took a sad farewell of each other, for I was to start at seven the next morning.

X Court appeared but little more gloomy for the presence of death within its walls. Full as my mind was of uneasiness on Dick's account, I could not but reflect with mournful commiseration

tion on the dreary, joyless life and unwept death of poor old Withers. She had been ignorantly faithful and true to her employers, and, in her rough way, kind to us lads. She had done her duty according to her lights, and I felt remorseful to think that neither prayer nor blessing had been breathed by the side of the lonely corpse.

I determined to conquer the nervous horror that oppressed me, and strive to utter a prayer over the forsaken remains. The body had been laid out and was already placed in a shell. The poor old woman's grey hair had been decently combed under a snowy cap, and the still white features, from which all the unlovely lines traced by care and labour had vanished, had assumed that ineffable expression of peace and holiness which belongs only to death. The remembrance of my own loved but long-forgotten mother's death-bed came upon me, and with it, as if by enchantment, the words of the simple prayer she had taught me to repeat on the anniversaries of my father's death. I fell upon my knees and prayed fervently for the first and last time in X Court. Then kissing the poor old woman's cold forehead, I left her alone with "easeful death."

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#### CHAPTER XIII.

"There was resemblance such as true blood wears,  
And now to see them thus divided stand  
In fixed ferocity."—BYRON.

"Past hope, and in despair ; that way past grace."—SHAKESPEARE.

EVEN if I had the memory, I should not have the heart to dwell upon any of the incidents of that journey from London to Nice. In consequence, no doubt, of my utter inexperience, and of my physical infirmity, it was even more painful and fatiguing than I had anticipated ; but the anxiety I suffered lest I should not arrive in time rendered every other distress or discomfort light in comparison. Even the exquisite loveliness of the scenery, of which I was vaguely conscious, was oppressive to me ; the serenity of that heavenly sea and sky was in too painful contrast with the tumult of my own thoughts.

I had no difficulty in tracing Viscount L——; he had evidently not sought concealment, and had stopped *en route* at the best hotels. When I reached the Hôtel de L'Ecu d'Or at Nice, however, I learned that he had taken the Villa S——, about six miles away from the town, if my memory serve me right.

I met no trace of St. John and Dick, however, and was compelled to come to the conclusion that they had taken a different route. Even when I reached Nice, I could not find their names in the strangers' book at any of the hotels. At length when I remembered

the purpose of their journey, it occurred to me as possible that they might have thought it wiser to travel under assumed names, and I therefore decided that the wisest course for me to adopt, would be to proceed at once to the Villa S——, and endeavour to see Miss Prescott. If they had not made their appearance there, I was still in time; and I might, by warning her, prevent the catastrophe I so dreaded from taking place; at any rate if Viscount L—— and Dick had met, she must know it, and could give me all the details.

Having determined to put this plan in execution forthwith, I ordered the commissioner of the Ecu d'Or to get me a chaise with fast horses, in order to proceed to the Villa S——. While I was impatiently waiting in the court-yard of the hotel a carriage drove up to the door, and to my inexpressible relief, Miss Prescott herself descended from it, and was already asking information of the concierge with regard to the packets for Marseilles, when I hurried up to her with such unfeigned delight, that although she certainly appeared much surprised and coloured violently at the sight of me, she was very gracious, and smiled as sweet and bewitching a smile as ever at my agitation and excitement, the cause of which she undoubtedly mistook.

"Good God, how delighted I am to have found you!" I exclaimed; "but I have something of the utmost importance to say to you. Can I not see you for a moment alone?"

She ordered the waiters to show her an apartment, and to bring refreshments, with the air of a queen, and then turning to me, said, "Now, Mr. Lovel, what is this tremendously important news? Are you quite sure I do not know it already?"

"What! have you then seen Dick?"

"Yes, indeed, I have seen too much of Dick," she answered, pettishly; then, seeing my look of astonishment and annoyance, she added, "Really, Mr. Lovel, I do hope you have not come all the way to Nice merely to sing hymns to Dick, as you used to do in X Court; for I can assure you, I am less than ever in the humour to listen to them. He has behaved here in the most absurd and unjustifiable manner, and has done all he could to spoil the good news he brought of my being restored to my rightful position and property."

I was confounded at first by the attack, but after a moment's pause, I said: "But did he not tell you you are his sister?"

"His *half*-sister you mean,—yes; and he certainly endeavoured to prove his relationship by rendering himself as rude and disagreeable as only relations can be. But, do not let us talk of these disagreeables; look at this exquisite blue sea and sky; I declare I almost regret leaving it for gloomy England, even though it be to claim my rights."

"Forgive me, Miss Prescott," I said; "I am most unwilling, believe me, to talk of 'disagreeables,' but anxiety for my cousin's safety compels me to ask you whether he has seen Viscount L——."

"Seen him? Why, of course! Was not the sole object of his coming here to seek him out for the purpose of insulting him? And most thoroughly he fulfilled his mission, adding a little agreeable by-play of insults to me."

"Insults! Oh, Miss Prescott!—he whose only thought was of saving you."

"Saving me!" she answered, angrily. "Pray, Mr. Lovel, do not imagine that I intend to submit to a *réchauffé* of Dick's insolence from you. My half-brother's coarseness and violence have separated me from Viscount L—— precisely when—had he used a little politeness and discretion—circumstances might have united us for life. That mischief, however, is over; but I am at least my own mistress, and equally independent of half-brothers and *cousins*; so I will submit to no more rudeness from either."

So saying she moved to ring the bell, but I—too unhappy on Dick's account to care for her displeasure—seized her hand, saying: "I am going, madam; all I ask is that you will tell me where to find Dick; it is a matter of life and death."

"Nonsense, Mr. Lovel; pray do not be so excessively melodramatic. It really does not suit our prosaic nineteenth century. Your matter of life and death is most probably settled long ago, and *honour is satisfied*," she added, with a pretty little sneer—"without a scratch on either side."

"Oh, my God!" I exclaimed in despair, "do you mean that they have fought already?"

"I mean that they were breathing fire and fury when I left them; but Viscount L—— had still to procure a second. Dick had that silly young St. John with him—so that perhaps life and death are yet trembling in the balance."

"Great Heaven! how can you laugh?"

"My dear, dramatic Mr. Lovel, during the short time I was in Paris there were several affairs of life and death in our circle, and the very worst results were an arm in a sling for a short time. The combatants always showed unexampled valour, of course, until the seconds interposed and declared honour was satisfied, after which the gentlemen shook hands and were adored as heroes by all the ladies of their circle, until the next affair of life and death caused them to be forgotten."

"You know nothing of Dick, Miss Prescott;—but tell me quickly, where were they to meet—"

"Somewhere in the grounds of the Villa S—— I suppose. They are quite large, overgrown, and deserted enough to allow of fifty affairs of life and death at the same time—"

I turned from her without answering, and bidding the commissioner tell the coachman I would make his fortune if we were in time, I sprang into the carriage that was waiting for me, and in less than half an hour the panting horses drew up at the Villa S——.



The place looked utterly deserted. The huge iron gates were unfastened, and we eagerly pushed them open and entered the grass-grown courtyard, from whence a handsome flight of marble steps led up to the terrace upon which the villa stood. On the road I had explained the object of my anxiety to the commissioner, and he recommended me not to waste time by entering the house—duels, he said, were never fought in houses,—and he suggested that the driver, himself, and I, should all search the grounds in different directions, and the first to find traces of the combatants should whistle as loudly as he could for the others, and hasten on to bid the seconds stop the proceedings.

Forgetting my lameness, I ran on and on, now through vine-trellised shady walks, now through quaintly disposed open spaces with broken marble fountains or statues in the centre; up and down lordly terraces, grass-grown and neglected; dimly conscious of the elegant and luxuriant decay so characteristic of the old villas of Italy,—one moment starting off with the fresh energy of hope, and the next almost breaking down with fatigue and despair. I was nearly spent, when, as I emerged from under a sort of bower of oleanders, bent and twined to overshadow a fountain which had ceased to play, I came suddenly in sight of the objects of my search.

They were standing upon a raised terrace still far off, but I saw them all so distinctly through the clear Italian air, that I could recognise each from the other, and plainly discern their movements.

No; I was not too late—evidently the seconds were measuring the ground. Dick, easily distinguished from the rest by his superior height, was standing a little apart. His antagonist appeared to be talking—I fancied even laughing—with a gentleman who held something under his arm—the surgeon, of course.

I shouted as loudly as I could, but I was very breathless; they did not hear me. I waved my pocket handkerchief, but I was upon much lower ground; they did not see me.

I leaned for a moment against the wall near me to recover my strength for another effort; for I was dreadfully exhausted, and nearly fainting with the pain my long run had produced in my lame leg. It then struck me that it was precisely because I had been sheltering myself from the sun by running in the shadow of this wall, that I had failed to attract their attention. As this idea occurred to me, I once more raised my eyes to the group on the terrace, and saw St. John in the act of handing a pistol to Dick. The sight gave me strength—I started out into the hot sunlight, and waving my handkerchief upon the end of my stick, with a last effort, I shrieked rather than shouted St. John's name.

They heard me! I saw them all turn round to look; I saw Dick's angry and impatient gesture; I saw the seconds speak for one moment together, and then run down the steps of the terrace towards me. After that I saw no more, for I fell on the ground fainting, utterly overcome with pain and emotion.

The next thing of which I was conscious was St. John's voice asking me what had brought me. I gasped out, "Oh, St. John!—oh, sir," turning to the other second, who was helping me to rise, "for the love of God, stop them! they must not fight!"

"Not fight!" exclaimed St. John; "are you mad, Ned?—there is no help for it—they must fight now."

"Indeed, sir, we have done everything that could be done," said the gentleman upon whose arm I was leaning, and whose name I afterwards learned was Captain Paulett, "and now we cannot allow you to interfere. We should be unwilling to use force, but unless you retire at once——"

"Stop, sir, hear me out. I have a letter for Viscount L——; only let me give him that letter, and if he insists upon fighting Cornet Prescott after he has read it, I give you my word of honour I will neither say nor do more to interfere."

Captain Paulett looked at St. John, who said, "I think we ought to allow him to give the letter to L——. I will answer for Mr. Lovel's keeping his word."

"Yes, yes! it is a duty, you must let him have it," I said, taking advantage of Paulett's hesitation, to hurry forward. They followed in silence, evidently vanquished by my earnestness, but dissatisfied. I ran on, and thrust the letter into Viscount L——'s hands; he and the surgeon were staring at us in mute astonishment; but Dick, to whom I turned, eager to embrace him, drew back from me, and said reproachfully, "Oh, Ned, Ned! I never thought you would have done this."

At this moment an exclamation from the viscount caused us both to turn round and look at him. His hand trembled, he was very pale, and after fixing his eyes on Dick for a moment with an indescribable expression, he put the letter into the second's hands, saying in a low voice, "Settle it as you can; I cannot fight him." He then turned away. St. John and Paulett glanced rapidly over the letter, and then looked at one another with faces full of dismay. At length Captain Paulett advanced to Dick, and said, "Cornet Prescott, this affair cannot go on. My principal deeply regrets the unhappy circumstances that led to the challenge, but he has received a communication from his father which renders it impossible the matter should be settled as we had proposed; he therefore——"

"He therefore is a coward, as well as a villain," said Dick, in whose crimson brow I read the idea that the viscount refused to fight with him in consequence of the stigma attached to his birth.

Viscount L——'s eye flashed fire, and his pale cheek flushed, as he angrily faced round upon Dick, and at that moment the likeness between the two brothers was striking; then recollecting himself, he drew back again, saying, "I cannot fight him."

Dick sprang forward with uplifted arm, evidently determined to force him to fight, by striking him in our presence. St. John and

Paulett both threw themselves upon him and seized his arm; but Dick, who was naturally far stronger than either, and whose strength was now redoubled by fury, would soon have thrown them both from him, had not St. John exclaimed to me,—

"Give him the letter."

I snatched it up from the ground, where it had fallen in the struggle, and holding it towards Dick, cried, "Read it, Dick! it is from your father."

The words acted like a spell. He instantly ceased the struggle, eagerly grasped the letter, read it, and let it fall without speaking. His flushed and angry features turned white as stone. He turned his eyes on the viscount, who was standing apart with his head bowed down, with an expression of mingled pain and hatred I shall never forget; then turning away, with a strange, shivering sigh, said, "*He my brother; O God, it is too much!*"

He reeled like a drunken man as he spoke the words, and had not St. John and Paulett supported him, he must certainly have fallen.

There was a silence of a few moments which none of us dared to break. At length Viscount L—— raised his head, and beckoning me to go to him, said in a hoarse and broken voice: "But, sir, the lady,—for God's sake tell me the truth; he said she was his sister: she is not, she cannot, be my father's child."

"No."

"Thank God!" he said with a deep sigh of relief, and wiping the perspiration from his pale face: "the whole thing was so sudden, so strange; I felt,—that is, I fancied,—really I was quite unmanned."

While Captain Paulett explained to the bewildered surgeon that his services would not be wanted, as there would be no duel, St. John joined Viscount L—— and me, saying: "He has asked me to leave him alone for a few moments, poor fellow." I looked round, and saw that Dick had walked away and was leaning against a tree some distance off.

"But I don't quite like your leaving him, St. John," said I.

"He begged me to do so."

"This is all very dreadful," said the viscount, "but it is not so bad as I feared. If we all swear to keep the thing a secret, perhaps in time things will come right. It is deuced disagreeable to be so hated by one's own father's son."

"Then you had better do justice to his sister," said St. John, bluntly.

Viscount L—— did not answer.

"Don't you think we might go to him now, St. John?" I said, looking at Dick; "his thoughts must be so very bitter."

"He made me promise to give him ten minutes to come to himself," said St. John, looking at his watch; "besides, you see he is quite calm, he is writing something."

"Gentlemen," said the surgeon, advancing, and addressing us in French, "since I find from Captain Paulett that all is happily at an

end, I will, if you please, return to my patients, for I see my services will not be——”

He was interrupted by the report of a pistol.

“My God, your friend has shot himself!” he exclaimed, seizing his case of instruments and running towards Dick. We all rushed with him to the spot, and St. John, reaching first, raised his dear head from the ground. A stream of blood flowed from his mouth and nostrils while the surgeon hastily began cutting away the breast of his coat.

“Dick, dear Dick!” I cried in despair, seizing his hands.

There was no responsive pressure; nor was there any answering look from his fixed and glazing eyes.

After two minutes, during which we all held our breath in agonised suspense, the surgeon motioned to St. John to lay him down, saying: “It is no use, gentlemen, the ball has passed through the lungs; he is quite dead.”

“There’s a paper in his left hand,” said Paulett, with difficulty unclasping the rigid fingers, and handing it to St. John, who read it as well as he could through his tears, and then gave it to me. It was as follows:—

“Dear Ned and St. John. Forgive me. I cannot help it. God bless you both. Be good to her.”

My tears fell fast upon the paper. I could not speak. My senses seemed to be leaving me as I looked down on all I held dear in this world a corpse at my feet.

At length I was roused to a more complete sense of my misery by seeing Captain Paulett, the surgeon, and St. John lifting the body to carry it to the carriage they had in waiting at some distance from the Villa S——. Viscount L—— approached to bear his share in the burthen, but St. John said, “No, Ned must come; you have no right; this is as much your work as if you had fired the pistol yourself.”

The young man shrank away without answering, and I took his place.

We carried him to Nice in silence. Captain Paulett and Dr. C—— undertook to inform the authorities of the occurrence. There was no difficulty in proving a suicide testified to by so many respectable witnesses. Viscount L—— left Nice immediately after the funeral, which he attended in spite of St. John, who did not scruple to tell him he had no business there.

As for me, the fatigue, excitement, and grief I had undergone, acting upon a physique so weak by nature, threw me into a fever, from which I only recovered after many months, thanks to the skill and attention of Dr. C——, to whose care St. John was obliged to leave me, as he considered it a duty, in fulfilment of Dick’s last words, “Be good to her,” to accompany his sister to England and see her safely settled in Miss McGregor’s care, until she were placed in possession of her property.

When I was sufficiently recovered to read the letters St. John had written to me after his arrival in England, I learned that she had shown more feeling than he had expected at the news of her brother's death, and had expressed her intention of living with Miss McGregor, as a proof of respect for his wishes. These good resolutions did not last long, however, and scarcely two months after Miss Prescott took possession of her estate the two ladies parted in anger, never to meet again. I learned with surprise afterwards that Miss Prescott had made friends with her uncle, and that the two were living in apparent harmony at B—— Grange.

St. John attributed this to Earle's having traded upon some ugly rumours which had got about with regard to Miss Prescott's connection with Viscount L——, to persuade her that the presence and protection of her nearest relation were necessary to her reputation. My poor uncle was conveyed to a private lunatic asylum, where St. John went to see him, and found him peaceful and contented, and engaged as usual in preparing the articles of partnership for his son's entry into the then extinct firm of Prescott and Earle. There were letters also from Earle himself to me, asking my instructions as to the disposal of my own property, which had been well administered by my uncle, and now amounted to a considerable sum. Having an invincible repugnance to the idea of returning to London, where, since St. John's regiment had been ordered to Malta, I had neither relation nor friend, save my poor insane uncle, I left the investment of my money in Mr. Earle's hands, and to do him justice, I must say I had no reason to repent the trust I reposed in him. Miss McGregor had, I think, spoken the truth when she said that in the matter of B—— Grange he had really persuaded himself that he was justified in endeavouring to regain by fraud, a property of which he believed himself to have been illegally and unjustly deprived.

I have but little more to tell. Dick's death had made life a blank to me, and for five long years I wandered over Europe, aimless, and nearly always alone: friendless, useless, and conscious of the waste of my existence, yet lacking alike the moral and physical energy to render it worthier.

One day, at Genoa, I read in an old number of *Galignani's Messenger*, which had been left behind by a passing traveller, a rather long account of a duel fought between two Englishmen, at Brussels, in which both were wounded, one in the face, and the other in the arm. The initials only were given; but I felt certain that the adversaries were St. John and Viscount L——.

The account concluded by saying that one of the gentlemen engaged, an officer, had since returned to England, in consequence of the death of his elder brother, by which he had become heir to a large estate and the title of baronet.

As I knew the name of St. John's father's estate, I wrote a letter addressed to him there, which he answered by return of post, giving

me so cordial an invitation to England, that my heart swelled within me to think I had one friend in the world still. I started the same night, and in less than a week I arrived at W—— Park. I found St. John absolutely unchanged by his accession to fortune. The future baronet sucked his stick as pertinaciously as ever the captain of the Guards had done. I noticed, however, that he still wore his arm in a sling. But it was not until the next day, when we strolled out alone together for a country walk, that I was able to speak freely to him of old times, and to ask him, "How came you to fight Viscount L——?"

"I'll be d——d if I know! Because I couldn't help it, somehow. I met him quite by chance at a dinner given by Russell of ours, who had just won a lot of money at Homburg. Perhaps I had had too much wine, perhaps he had. I know I hated the very sight of him, and I contradicted everything he said till he couldn't stand it; and next morning, when we had to fight about it, neither of us knew which had challenged the other. But, of course, neither of us would apologise even then, when we were cool. I got this thrust in my arm and have been disabled ever since, but I didn't care a damn, for my sword flew up and gave him such an ugly slash across the nose that I don't think he'll seduce many more young ladies from the paths of virtue." And St. John laughed heartily.

As he spoke, a handsome carriage and pair dashed through the narrow lane in which we were walking, splashing us with mud from head to foot.

"It is very ungentlemanlike to allow one's coachman to drive at that rate through such narrow lanes," said I, very angrily.

"You would be more angry than you are, if you knew who it was," said St. John.

"Why, who is it?"

"*Squire Earle*; this is his land; that white house yonder is B—— Grange."

"*Squire Earle*! *his* land! what has become of Miss Prescott then?"

"Oh! she died, poor thing, of consumption, last year. So you see he need not have plotted and schemed so hard. It has all fallen to him at last."

"And to think of poor, dear Dick lying in his lonely grave at Nice!" I exclaimed. "Ah, St. John, I often think of poor old Withers's words—'this ain't justice.'"

"Oh! come now, damn it," said St. John, "who would not rather be Dick?"

"That's true," said I; "but it's cold comfort."

I looked at St. John for an answer, but he was sucking his stick.

THE END.

## LORD BYRON AND HIS TIMES.

(Continued from p. 577.)

—  
"Sorrow seems half of his immortality."—*Cain*.

IN two of Mr. Robert Browning's recent works, he attacks Byron with a strange fury that seems to me far less psychologically discriminating than might have been expected from him. He pokes fun at Byron's slip of "lay" for "lie" in the deservedly celebrated passage of Childe Harold about the sea—a slip which Shelley also makes in his splendid lines on the "Apennine." We have heard a good deal about this in the newspapers, and it is all very well there; for Byron was apt to be careless and rude in diction as well as in rhythm; but it seems a little strange for Mr. Browning (of whose genius I am a very warm admirer) to pitch into him on this score, his own language being as difficult to construe as the French of Rabelais, or the German of Hegel and Böhme. However the *substance* of the passage is his grand object of attack. In "Hohenstiel-Schwangau" he denies apparently that Byron was a worshipper of Nature at all; in "Fifine" he argues that to exalt Nature so highly as Byron does is false philosophy. He affirms, however, that in his admiration for the sea and mountains Byron was insincere, and only meant to attract attention to himself as an admirer of the sea more than other men, using the sea merely as convenient for "hitching into a stanza." In the latter work he argues (if I rightly comprehend him) that the sea and mountains, &c., are themselves constituted by what we men please to think and feel about them. This is apparently the peculiar modification of Berkeley's philosophy which is rather in vogue just now. I have written a long essay in the "Contemporary Review," June, 1872, to disprove it; so I may be forgiven for remarking that Byron was hardly bound to adopt Mr. Browning's metaphysics: indeed he was not a metaphysician at all; yet I fancy he has very fairly answered Mr. Browning by anticipation where he observes in "Don Juan" that when "Bishop Berkeley said there is no matter, 'twas no matter what he said." However, even on Mr. Browning's own showing, Byron was hardly the "flatfish" and "the cackling goose" he ventures to call him. For if the sea be sublime only because a man thinks so, then, as the average tourist who crosses from Dover to Calais, even when not sick, thinks nothing of the sort, Byron who made the sea sublime by feeling and expressing its sublimity must be so far superior to the average man, and quite as distinguished a person as he supposed himself. In fact, however conceited, *he* would not have known himself in this



tremendous rôle of *Creator*, which his philosophical antagonist by implication assigns to him.

But really it is news that Byron was a humbug also in this Nature-worship, of which we had all supposed him one of the principal founders and priests!—whose burning words of passionate adoration kindled one's own soul in boyhood to behold and worship—whose magnificent music, sonorous with storm and ocean and all that is free, illimitable, and enduring, thrilled the very heart of Europe, compelling it as at a god's command to bow down once more, when the angels of Faith and Hope seemed to be deserting for ever the desecrated shrines of mankind. Byron felt his own soul akin to all that was wild and stormful and immense, the moods of Nature solemnly and mysteriously responding to the moods in man. What though the soul be higher than the sea? To the sensitive and reflective spirit, the Sea, the Mountains, and the Stars are very types and symbols of Permanence, Order, Eternity. Nature and Man are elder Sister and younger Brother; she wakes intelligence and will in him; he knows himself in knowing her; she is a dumb and blind elder Sister whose laws inexorably bind him, while he imposes his spirit upon her, and reads spiritual meanings in her face. Man and his own soul were a chaos to Byron; yet in heroes and good women, but above all in the order of everlasting Nature, he found again the grandeur and divinity of a Kosmos. Individual human degradation, of which we in the midst can but dimly see the issue, receives a mystic interpretation from the unconscious innocence of a Divine Sphere which is evil and good, which is strong and weak, which is not individual but universal, and which is inchoate Humanity. Thence one can look up with greater trust than before even for the worms that sting one another in the dust. Why do the Arab in the desert, the Persian on his mountain, bow before the all-beholding Sun? In him is no sin, no vanity, folly, falsehood, or vain ambition; he gives life and light to all; himself veritable incarnation of one Invisible Sun.

Surely for Byron and such as he, in the absence of Revelation and Philosophy, this was the best school of morality. He who loses his own personality in Nature, who lays down before her, the Universal Mother and Tomb of Humanity, his own private wrongs and griefs and fevered aspirations, hereby redresses the balance so unduly weighted with the self-will and momentary longings of one restless passionate man. For She is One who toils not nor dreams, errs not nor supposes, raves not nor repents, but calmly fulfils Herself for ever. Mr. Browning would be impossible in those vast primeval realms where Nature still proudly asserts Her Dominion—where she oppresses men with creatures "burning bright in the forests of the night," shakes them from their bubble habitations in her delirium, decimates them with the breath of

pestilence and famine, overwhelms them in torrents of devastating fire!

In a time when all secrets were at length supposed to be laid bare before man's microscopic understanding, all superstitions exploded, all mysteries explained, when the universe emptied of ancient awe seemed no longer venerable, but a hideous lazar-house rather made visible to all human eyes in every ghastly corner of it—before the Circe-wand of Materialism, Love metamorphosed into a sensation, and Man shrivelled to a handful of dust—when the Body of God's own breathing World was laid with familiar irreverence upon the board of a near-sighted professor to be dissected—then the Prophet-poets, Rousseau and Byron, pointed men to the World-Soul, commanding them once more to veil their faces before the swift subtle splendour of Life; this they named Nature; we may name it God!

The reaction in favour of Nature and common humanity was indeed commenced in the generation preceding Byron—by the two great poets, Chatterton and Burns; by the genuine poets, Shenstone, Goldsmith, Gray, Thomson, Blake, and Cowper. It was developed in its distinctively modern form equally by Byron's contemporaries, Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats. Still none of Byron's contemporaries filled the European rôle as Nature-poets that Byron filled—though the four I have named are equally eminent in this capacity; and in some respects even his superiors. Thus Byron has not, like Wordsworth, distilled for us the very essence of Nature's gentler moods, has not listened at her very heart, and beheld all the subtle changes of her countenance in sunshine or other tranquil joy; has not associated these with gentle women walking along life's cool sequestered vale, and fading quietly heavenward—nor the stern strong power of northern mountains (which this great poet has equally felt) with calm faithful heroic men in however humble a guise; while there was less in Byron of the *mystical* element so hard to define, which was present with magical effect in all those I have named, and is equally present in Tennyson—though with "Manfred" and "Heaven and Earth" before me, I cannot say that in its own form it was altogether absent. But in Wordsworth, on the other hand, there is an absence of the Titanic diabolic element; there is a certain hardness, or obstinate dulness, a sober cautious rationality, a serene self-complacency begotten of good inherited physical and moral constitution, together with general comfortableness of condition, that prevented his responding fully to the mighty impulses of his time, so wise and yet so unwise; the people about him were contentedly orthodox, and he was as their fatherly minister: he viewed his own venerable image in the lakes, and smiled benignant; very pleasant also seemed to him the stately park of Lord Lonsdale, and he thanked Providence for Lonsdales and stately parks. "Strong passions mean weak will," sings Mr. Patmore; but these are axioms that, like certain toys, will stand equally well

on either end. Strong will may mean weak passions—mere fluttering impulses of a student, hardly needing the rock-built citadel of virtue to withstand them : there is real giant *strength* in a Byron, though it be ill-regulated. Nevertheless, so high-souled a poet as Wordsworth must needs break forth, ever and anon, into “a *sadder* and a wiser man ;” his genius was too real not to be sorrowful—too reflective not to give its own poetic and distinctively modern colouring to the accepted creed ; and in his reconstruction of the hollow conventional poetic diction, as in his resolute turning with Crabbe toward “the humble annals of the poor,” he showed himself also in his measure a child of the Revolution, though his political sympathies were conservative. But this Diabolic (not Revolutionary) element is far more pronounced in Tennyson than in Wordsworth. *His* range is a wide one, whatever poetlings and criticasters may say ; witness those haunting and terrible poems, *The Vision of Sin* and *Lucretius*.

In Byron, again, there is less of what we feel in so much of Shelley, wherever Shelley is at his best ; harmonious marriage of consummate feeling, imagery, and expression, perfect poetic music, equal to that of Shakspeare and Milton in their highest flights. We seldom feel in Byron's, as in Shelley's lyrics, the very quintessence of ethereal spiritualization, the very soul of absolutely faultless verbal melodies, rising, falling, wayward, and untameable as a fountain blown ever by the wind, subject to no law but the law of their own lawless and superhuman loveliness. At the same time Shelley's Protean impalpable superabundant splendours of imagery and diction are on the verge of vanishing into a spray of *mere* verbal effects, and sometimes his poetry unsuccessfully usurps the function of music proper. There was a certain absence in Shelley of that sustained architectonic creative faculty which is akin to Reason ; an absence which, were it not for his *transcendent* excellence in other respects, might even militate against his claim to be considered one of our country's greatest poets. There is, however, a rare transfused fragrance, and pervading air or tone, that gives a certain unity to his brilliant compositions ; but in Byron's best work, it is a complex organic whole, with members of differentiated function, that emerges, no mere roods of floating prismatic substance, with every part, as in low organizations, equally fulfilling the function of every other : yet he never gives an impression of mostly mechanical ingenuity, as does Southey ; his work is nourished upon passionate rational insight. Herein he is akin to the great creators ; he is clear, luminous, incisive, coherent in his descriptions ; healthy vision of a sane human creature never deserts him ; his strokes are few, yet sharp as those of a graving-tool, while Shelley's vision seems often blurred and confused. But it is only the general character of an object Byron gives ; and where he tries to be delicate and feathery in his touches, like Wordsworth, Keats, or Shelley, he frequently becomes merely tame and conventional.

Moreover, in justice to Wordsworth, it must be allowed that there are tedious lengths of somewhat commonplace verse even in the early tales, as likewise in the early parts of *Childe Harold*—plenty of them moreover in the dramas.

In seeking for a *note* of this peculiar modern Nature-worship, I think we must set down as a principal one, *Pantheism*, either overt or implicit. For it is a *worship*—precisely as the Scandinavian and Greek Mythologies are worships—only in a modern form; and there was *less* of this in Spenser, Shakspeare, the Fletchers, Browné, Drayton, or Milton, although in these poets delight in external nature was most fresh and genuine. But no less in Byron, Wordsworth, and Coleridge than in Shelley there was *worship* of the Creature; though in Byron, because he had less metaphysical grasp of thought, in Wordsworth and Coleridge, because they were by conviction theists, the Pantheism was implicit; while in Shelley, as in Goethe, it was overt. In Tennyson, a theist, it is again implicit. In Goldsmith and that generation, as in Chaucer, there is, of course, nothing of this. The fifth great nature-worshipper, Keats, is so far not pantheistic, because he is to all intents and purposes a polytheistic Greek myth-maker born out of due time: he personified Nature; as indeed to a large extent did Spenser, and the other Elizabethans, and Chatterton; where he does not, he endows her with animation akin to the human, which again reveals in him implicit pantheism. But Goldsmith (like the lesser Georgian poets, Rogers, Milman, &c.) regards the external world as the creation of a personal God, and simply records what he sees, and the pleasure it gives him, together with its remoter associations; always putting Nature well outside himself, humanity, and God, as something just created to be perceived and give us emotions—or food and raiment.

Byron's tales are delightfully steeped in a sunny Eastern atmosphere—though, perhaps, they are hardly equal in this respect to the few wonderful lines depicting Eastern travel in his own "*Dream*," to Beckford's "*Vathek*," or to "*Hermann Agha*," a quite marvellous Eastern novel, recently published by Mr. Gifford Palgrave, the traveller; worthy of Sir Walter Scott as a novel, of the Arabian Nights as an Eastern tale. Byron's later story "*The Island*," is however, deliciously suffused with the tropical glow—though the versification and diction of it are in his most curiously careless and objectionable manner.

Like the best lyrics of Burns and Scott, Byron's are more alive with warm humanity, go more to the heart of mankind, than those lovely dissolving phantasmal ones of Shelley; though it is to be admitted that there is a vein of coarse earthliness and commonness about Byron that makes many of his lyrics poor and wooden, as Shelley's never are. But his best are rich with a masculine sorrow, often graceful, and tenderly musical in the highest degree. One need

name only "Bright be the place of thy soul," "When we two Parted," "The Wild Gazelle," the poems to his sister and Thyrsa. Yet the most original and distinguished of Byron's lyrical work is certainly that in which his manifold wrath, his passion for wild life, and his ardour for human freedom, are embodied. How glorious the "Isles of Greece," how fine "Sennacherib," and "The Song of Saul;" how powerful the "Ode on Buonaparte," and the "Ode from the French!" The most concentrated venom of hate is distilled into the lyric, "When the Moon is on the Wave" in *Manfred*. But his odes on the whole are not equal to Shelley's, whose passion for human liberty was quite as ardent, and more spiritual than Byron's; purified by his longing for a reign of Love and Peace; so that he breaks ever and anon into heavenly seraphic strains, as in *Hellas* and *Prometheus*, borne aloft upon the strong wings of varied lyrical measures that never fail him. Shelley's fury of indignation in face of armed oppression is at white heat and tremendous; but there is a want of steadfast distinctness of thought, and aim, and feeling, even here. Byron may droop his pinion and flounder; but he never lacks this manful grasp of his theme; rejoicing moreover in the common earthly human effort and mixed stormy strife by which deliverance and the age of gold must sternly be fought for inch by inch. Hence, men in general will always feel his poetry more germane to them and to the real world. Shelley, the Peri, like his own skylark, sings to us from the sky.

The finest of the "tales," to my mind (it belongs to his later period), is "The Prisoner of Chillon;" that is in perfect harmony, and unutterably beautiful, with its solemn organ-peal of the "Sonnet to Liberty" as an overture. There is all Scott's unity of effect here, and more than his aroma of poetry indefinable. For Scott, it should be remembered, deliberately gave up the field of verse-poetry to his younger rival; he felt, and felt rightly, that they had much in common as poets, but that there was a *je ne sais quoi* about Byron's metrical work that made it for the most part rarer and higher in quality; they were both *romantic* poets, delighting in themes of love, and strife, and pageantry—with the supernatural mysterious element toning down the brilliancy of their work here and there. Scott had more of the plot-constructing faculty than Byron, and far more dramatic power: accordingly he became the greatest writer of prose fiction in the English language. For I cannot think (with all our abundant talent in this region) that, regarding him as a *spontaneous creative poet*, in the wider sense of that word, any English man or woman has ever rivalled him—except the man who surpasses all, Shakspeare: though Dickens has his own place apart, and Thackeray runs Scott very near. In his prose, by the way, Scott has achieved, I think, a finer work of art than Byron himself, in one of Byron's own special literary moods. I allude to the "Bride of Lammermoor,"

perhaps one of the four finest novels in the world ; "Don Quixote," "Les Misérables," and "Consuelo," being the other three. Moreover, Scott's feeling of the supernatural in Nature comes out especially in his novels, notably in the "Monastery:" this is very real and magical, and quite the feeling of mediæval romance, allowing for the difference of intellectual creed ; but all that was in his blood, and the traditions upon which he had been nourished. It is quite *akin* to Pagan Polytheism, and is just the old Nature-worship that could not be expelled altogether by the crude carpenter-theory which the established religion had made orthodox : the old gods might be devils and witches, as had been decreed ; but, anyhow, they would not be expelled altogether ; there they were mysteriously animating or inhabiting certain elements of Nature. The clouds were full of angels or demons ; the white light was God's throne, and fairies peopled the woods and streams. This feeling of physical elements as a *habitat* for spiritual beings is always associated with an instinctive fancy (or rather intuition) that they are a *naturally fit* habitation for them ; such spirits are virtually the souls corresponding to the bodies of these elements, the ideas, or spiritual essences of them personified—a conception so far justified by Philosophy, when she teaches that man is a final cause and consummation, a more perfectly finished truth, as it were, implicit in Physical Agencies : this Humanity repeating in a higher sphere the life of Nature, which is under one aspect that higher life in the forming, and repeating more emphatically in some Personalities than in others the special type of certain physical agencies—flowing stream in one man, stolid mountain in another : still the Pantheistic feeling that these Agencies are distinct though living Powers in communion with man, and influencing him, seems more essentially true—though of course there *may also* be individual spirits with subtle bodies inhabiting the various elements ; the elements themselves having, however, soul after their kind, as well as body. Thus in Dante's colossal poem, all the material imagery is informed with spiritual significance ; it is the elaborate embodiment of great moral and spiritual ideas : and Dante evidently looked with his earnest eyes upon the visible universe as God's grand symbol ; though of course his creed was Catholic and Theistic.

In "Childe Harold" there are passages which must hold their own for ever in the ranks of English poetry :—

"Once more upon the waters ! yet once more !  
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed  
That knows his rider ! Welcome to their roar !  
Swift be their guidance wheresoe'er they lead !  
Though the strained mast should quiver as a reed,  
And the rent canvas fluttering strew the gale,  
Still must I on, for I am as a weed  
Flung from the rock on ocean's foam to sail,  
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail !"

The exquisite lines that refer to Waterloo can hardly be forgotten—nor those sweet peaceful ones about Lake Lemán that breathe the twin influence of Lemán and of Shelley—nor the magnificent reverberation in clanging words of an Alpine thunder-storm :—

“Lausanne ! and Ferney ! ye have been the abodes  
Of names which unto you bequeathed a name !”

Ay, and what of Rousseau's Clarens ; of Geneva, the city of Calvin, that other great Genevese reformer, and now of Coppet, and Diodati ? These all, with Bonnivard, are a felt presence by Lemán—consecrating her shores and her waters. I went to Diodati lately. It was deserted, and we wandered through the rooms and about the garden where Byron and Shelley had sat conversing—where Milton too had set his foot in days gone by ! When Byron returned to Diodati, after sitting late into the night with Shelley on the opposite shore, the Shelleys from their chamber used to hear his rich voice singing across the water from his boat. Like Julie and St. Preux, he and Shelley were once nearly wrecked in a boat off Meillerie. This was the period at which one loves to think of the two poets as together, and afterwards at Venice, when they used to ride on the Lido. The 4th Canto, however, is grandest of all, has some of the finest descriptive poetry in our language. It opens worthily with Venice in her sad glory. How splendidly is the poet Tasso contrasted with his princely oppressor, Alphonso of Ferrara ! How the thunder and lightning of Terni's Cataract have passed into the shouting stanzas ! All the noble verses concerning Rome and her departed glories, her ruins and her triumphs of art, are worthy of the great subject. But what misery !—

“For all are meteors with a different name ;  
And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame !”

With that “*Marah of misanthropy and despair within,*” whom couldst thou trust, who could trust thee ? Not even God to trust in, or the Divine All, which is self-reconciled, and of which thou wast one Age's world-agonizing Spirit ! After a stately and most pathetic lamentation over Princess Charlotte, there grow upon the soul and resound those ocean murmurs, which are the conclusion and crowning poetry of a poem that will be forgotten only with its native tongue. Vanishes here the “*Pilgrim of Eternity*” :—

Βῆ δάκεῦν παρὰ θίνα πολυήλοισβοιο θαλάσσης.

But since Byron, let us remember that the Age is awakening to new life—“*The age of ruins is past.*” It is full of Devil and Mammon worship, death, agony, and vulgar fever ; but he is no great poet who daintily hides himself from it in the study or the studio. The people are awake ; thought is awake ; each must enter into the life of the rude giant ; he only who does so dare pretend to see



beyond. There are great wars, and national movements, wonderful inventions, terrible conflict of principles ; the world is recreated at the breath of science ; our explorers visit all countries, and Columbus-like discover new continents : "Pioneers ! O Pioneers !"

Byron, in "Don Juan" especially, has shown a boundless creative imagination of the *realistic* order. Where men and women of a certain type are concerned, and that type is by no means so limited as Macaulay and some other critics have maintained, where the grander elements of Nature are in question, as also, in the evocation of high thoughts and feelings of a definite range in connection with these, he is first-rate, as frequently in tenderness. But for the creation of ideal worlds and their denizens, governed by lofty reflective imaginative purpose, and requiring sustained flights in high spiritual atmospheres, we must turn to Dante, Milton, or Shakspeare. In Byron fine typical Personifications are rare, such as we find in Spenser or Chatterton—Byron's "War," in "Childe Harold" being adapted from a finer personification in the "Marvellous Boy." Yet the strangely beautiful "dramatic mystery," "Heaven and Earth," might almost be excepted from this criticism, for here the gloom of coming Deluge and its deepening terrors are palpably, yet with appropriate indistinctness of visionary imagery, rolled around mystic loves of "woman wailing for her demon lover." Here there is much of the fine sweep of a great *idealistic* artist's brush : still even this required imagination of a far less idealistic order than the construction of a Pandemonium, a Hell, or a Purgatory. Bring that sea, and those mountains, which the poet knew so well, together—the great spectacular phenomena of mountain, cloud, and ocean—and there looms the Deluge. Byron's wonted range of subject and treatment is hardly here self-surpassed. His personages, even his immortals, are still embodiments of the same feelings, thoughts, and desires. Yet the dim outlines of those exulting demons in the twilight ; those angel-forms, and the women who call them, Abolibamah, and tender Anah ; the good men Japhet and Noah ; Raphael appearing to summon the new rebel angels to their duty ; the welter of common mortals struggling with doom—all this forms a magnificent lurid picture of a "world before the flood" that is almost worthy of our loftier spiritual masters. Still there is little here of sustained imaginative incarnation and realization of spiritual things—with wizard flashings of weird yet appropriate detail helping to impress the Dædal individualities sprung from the brain of their creator upon us. The Melancholia of Dürer—Sin and Death—Caliban—those apocalyptic souls in the Doom-circles of the Florentine, the regions wherein they dwell awfully aware with populous imagery, whereunto they appear as native—think of these ! and again of fantastic dream-worlds, self-involved and subtly infinite like the rose—*Midsummer Night's Dream*, the *Tempest*, Shelley's *Prometheus*,

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visions of Calderon, Keats, and Coleridge. Nevertheless, there is a harmonious lyrical atmosphere pervading this grand shadowy creation, which sets it by itself as a great ideal work of a Master, who is perhaps greatest as a realistic poet. There is also one magnificent verse in the "Vision of Judgment" describing Satan, which, if it were not somewhat a reminiscence of Milton, one might pronounce Miltonic.

But although I hold with Shelley, Goethe, Scott, and Wilson, that "Cain" is one of the finest poems in our language, the early portion of the poem, wherein Byron may be said to enter into direct competition with Milton, is surely a failure. There is no soul-overwhelming grandeur at all in those queer regions of space to which he conducts Lucifer and Cain. Lucifer, moreover, is a melancholy Byron, only a little more graceful and sentimental than Cain. In his long discourse with Cain we discern little difference between them, while we do painfully feel here, as elsewhere in Byron where thought is wanted, that if Byron had been a thinker like Dante, or Milton, or Goethe, he might have sat beside the three greatest poets of Europe, Homer, Dante, and Shakspeare; but the lucubrations of Cain and Lucifer lack vigour and point, as those of Faust and Mephistopheles never do. It is in the human element, however, that Cain is so magnificent, as a *great dramatic picture*. And I cannot but think that though Byron is not a great dramatist, he is a great dramatic painter. I believe it is Wilson who says, that his groups and personages are as statuesque bronzes cast in the fire. It is to be recollected that Goethe, who ought to be an authority, most highly praised his dramas. Certainly he has not the wonderful skill in dramatic dialogue of Landor; nor in dramatic monologue of Mr. Browning. But where Byron is effective in drama, it is by lyrically pouring the quintessence of his characters into the mould of one supreme situation, capable of realising them with the utmost intensity. This seems to be somewhat true of Hugo also, though Hugo has more plot-constructing faculty—arranges and dovetails his incidents with all the skill of Calderon,—and heightens his effects by varying, as it were, and multiplying with tremendous prodigality of power such great effective situations. But there is little Shakspearian development of character either in Hugo or Byron; yet I should maintain, as against the ordinary criticism, that Byron can realise characters of a type opposite to that one type most congenial to his genius, sufficiently to present these as truly and vitally influencing one another, especially in certain supreme scenes or situations; that is not so in *Manfred*, which is a mere monologue; but it is so in "Cain," "Marino Faliero," and "Sardanapalus." From the third act onward, Cain becomes and continues magnificent—from where Cain mutters forebodings over little Enoch, his own and his sister Adah's child, while she gently remonstrates, to where Cain is contrasted with Abel, as the spirit of revolt and denial with that of tranquil faith, rising to utmost

heights of moral dignity and wrath, where Abel confronts the blasphemer who would overthrow the chosen altar of Jehovah, his own proud offering lying unaccepted, his own altar smitten to the dust. There is nothing in English poetry finer for tragic intensity and pathos, than the supreme scene where Cain strikes his brother dead with a brand snatched from the altar, then bows in horrified remorse over the corpse—he who so sullenly arraigned the fated Doom, fated through his own passions, half-righteous and half-evil, to bring himself that hated Doom into the world; Eve, the mother of all, cursing with terrific energy her own eldest-born, slayer of her well-beloved son; gentle Zillah, Abel's wife, lamenting over him; and Adah, one of the most perfect types of holy womanhood in literature,—Adah, when the dark smitten murderer bids her leave him alone, only answering with troubled wonder, "Why, all have left thee!" Then Cain, the brand upon his brow, wanders forth with Adah into the wilderness, she leading their little Enoch by the hand, kissing Abel's cold clay, and praying "Peace be with him!" to which Cain in the last words of this great poem responds, "But with *me*!" Byron's Cain is by no means a very wicked man; he is surprised as it were into the murder, and, as matters are here represented, we feel that he did well to be angry. He with becoming dignity makes an offering appropriate to him, according to his light, which he may well hope that the all-seeing, just God will accept; he is throughout half-doubtful about his God, half-defiant of what seems to himself evil in that God. His very objection to the sacrifice of innocent animals proves him to be humane, and a foe to all cruel oppression, as also his abhorrence of human vengeance, even in Deity, if it were true that Deity needed to be propitiated by bloody sacrifice. Since the great and holy Christian reformer of our nineteenth century, Frederick Maurice, need Christians any longer think this poem very blasphemous? That there are "*no ideas*" in Byron, moreover, Mr. Arnold in the face of this poem should scarcely maintain. I conceive "Cain" to be the philosophico-imaginative consummation to which the *Tales*, "*Manfred*," and "*Childe Harold*" tended. Together with "*Manfred*," moreover, it proves Mr. Brown- ing's objection as to Byron's unduly exalting Nature over men, a somewhat unfortunate one. If you must judge a poet as you would a didactic philosopher, I should say that Byron's error is, on the contrary, in unduly exalting the individual human spirit; in a lack of humility and resignation. Cain, like Faust, is insatiably curious, and chafes against the limitations of human knowledge; yet he represents a faithless desultory time, which *ours* still is, moreover; for in this region of the intellect, he rather seems angry at not knowing without being at the trouble of learning; he takes no laborious pains reverently to seek truth. In that, too, Byronism represents an age of rather shallow scepticism that sneers and sighs over the insolubility of problems, which it is too weak and idle manfully to grasp—but with

a doom overshadowing himself, his beloved ones and all mankind, which seems to him unintelligible and unjust, he refuses to be meekly happy and content, even though he loves Adah and his child; he is the Genius of speculative yearning, oppressed and over-charged with evil within, the curse of hereditary sin; morbidly sensitive to evil without; over-clouding all past, present, and prospective good with the gloom of his own sullen frown, out of which must inevitably spring the lightning of his crime; even by the side of his own true wife and his own sweet boy, *alone!* In a fine sonorous invective Lucifer avers that God Himself, however powerful, must be most miserable of all—for He is the most *alone*. Could He but annihilate himself and all, but alas for His and our *immortality!* Cain finds too that "*the tree of knowledge is not that of life.*" Byron's is the wail of baffled human understanding, without faith, hope, resignation, self-control, inward harmony. But if in "*Cain*" he defies heaven, in "*Manfred*" he defies hell, and denies, though I think in vain, the power of any evil spirits over him, asserting proudly, and with truly sublime daring, his own spiritual independence and dignity. He is a Pagan, not a Christian, though with some genuine Christian sympathies, and a Hebrew creed still hanging about him. But he never holds up self-sacrifice, humility, or patience, is always haughty and aggressive; he endures, indeed, but somewhat less than a Pagan—he more actively despairs and rebels.

Christianity has taught him discontent with this life, but he cannot accept the solutions of her theologians; so with tenfold more bitterness than Atrides exclaiming to Zeus, when his sword broke in his hand, "*There is no God more evil-minded than thou*"—than the Neapolitan fisherman beating the image of his Saint, who sends storms instead of fine weather—Byron defies and rails against his Deity. But of course *he* had only a lingering notion that the popular representation might be true, and that there was really a Creator, who, having created immortal spirits, tyrannically forbids them, as Lucifer finely phrases it, "*to use their immortality,*" their reason, their conscience, and their heart. It is against this God, formed in the image of priests and kings, that Lucifer and Cain rebel, rather than against the true Author and Essence of Things. Of this true Author and Essence of Things Byron had unfortunately, from the circumstances of his time, and his own want of philosophic grasp, very little idea; yet he believed in a God; and very naturally, however irrationally, confounded the true God with the current orthodox conception of Him, against which he inveighed—if vaguely, still with enlightened soul, knowing that God was by theology caricatured, and that the vulgar conception was monstrous and to be fought against. But after all, this was a *dominant* conception, one that had always been dominant more or less; the force of education, authority, universal conviction, practically moulding all the relations of society, together with the poet's own

ineffectual habit of thought, forced the Idea on him as a kind of Reality; but his better yet audacious self dared to wrestle with it, even on this basis of its dubious reality; so Job ventures to argue with the Lord. In fact, a half truth this belief must be, and for long it has been to mankind as a whole truth; "the times of this ignorance God winked at;" but the idea of Him must be slowly purified. Acquiescence in evil is not altogether desirable, and to pronounce evil good, because divinely appointed, may be to fetter ourselves, the human race, and its destiny of progress. There might even be an evil Demiurgus, God of this world, as some Gnostics believed; if so, Byron will not worship *him*. Byron holds the human spirit, or at least the *elect* human spirit, with its Eternal Reason and Sense of Justice, essentially equal to any gods or devils whatsoever, however powerful these may be. Both Manfred and Cain hurl defiance at the very skies. What makes Cain sound blasphemous is that Cain believes in Jehovah, yet defies him; this is precisely as Shelley's Prometheus defies Zeus; but we have been brought up to call this apparent wrong of theology right, because we are assured that it is divinely revealed, whereas we should have asked ourselves, *how can doctrines be revealed unless by an anti-Christ or usurping God, if they are irrational or immoral?* Lucifer and Cain, like Prometheus, are champions of human liberty. The ultimate arbiter, Fate, will dethrone the unjust Zeus in the end. To this true God they virtually appeal, and they cannot be disappointed; or in other words, they really appeal from God in His partial, to God in His fuller revelation of Himself, which He is indeed making through themselves; yet their shallow presumption and irreverence He disapproves and punishes; still it is He, the World-spirit, striving in them to free Himself, though he justifies also the humble holy Abels. If the evil cannot be destroyed, it can be chained down; the Good, and Just, and Rational is Lord over the Evil and Inane; that is a slave, a drudge, essential indeed, yet subordinate and to be subordinated. One can indeed only sympathise *partly* with this revolt; it is *in part* directed against the very nature of things, against the true Sovereign God, who must be beyond our right and wrong, right in a manner and degree to which our rectitude cannot attain. Neither Byron nor Shelley were possessed with that *awe* which becomes a mortal before the unfathomable Mystery. Even in his beloved storms Byron felt little spiritual awe, was chiefly "sharer in their fierce and far delight," or recklessly contemptuous of humanity's weakness. Cain's sullen hatred of effort and labour, his want of patient faith, his obstinate self-will, his ignorance of how to conquer Fate by calmly accepting it, or circumventing it by fertility of resource, this is truly evil and folly, and miserable weakness; it is anarchy, the weakness of all radical rebellion, for instance of the recent insane developments of destructive irreligion and democracy. Yet when all is said, is there not the

mysterious and unutterably awful Fountain of Evil, coæval in some inscrutable manner with that of Good? Forgive then the cry of rebellious despair! it too proceeds from the heart of the infinite. Happiness! wonder at *that* rather.

Macaulay says Byron can only paint one man and one woman—a gross exaggeration; for Don Juan and Sardanapalus are so different from Cain that they cannot be confounded; and as to women, it is mere confusion of thought to confound Adah, Angiolina, Haidee, Gulnare, and Myrrha, wonderfully realised and thoroughly feminine types all of them. Gulnare is the passionate fierce beautiful southern woman, of which type Byron has given us many brilliant portraitures. Haidee is a loving passionate girl, but a thoroughly innocent, albeit fiery-natured one—she might indeed become Gulnare, but she is something totally distinct.<sup>1</sup> Adah is not to be surpassed for heavenly yet human tender unsullied perfection of womanliness—a perfect sister, mother, wife; she is not surpassed in Shakspeare, Victor Hugo, George Sand, Walter Scott; even the Marguerite of Goethe is only equal to her. Then we have Zarina in “Sardanapalus,” Angiolina in “Marino Faliero,” skilfully painted women of a totally different order—noble women too—both evidently intended for idealised portraitures of Lady Byron—self-possessed, stately, somewhat cold, yet excellent and affectionate. In “Don Juan,” how marvellously good is Donna Julia—and her letter how immortally inimitable! We have again Lady Adelaide Amundeville, a very clever sketch of an English lady of fashion, and the sweet seraphic Aurora Raby, a sort of English Adah.

“Aurora Raby, a young star who shone  
O’er life, too sweet an image for such glass,  
A lovely being scarcely formed or moulded,  
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded.  
She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,  
As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,  
As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,  
And kept her heart secure within its zone.  
There was awe in the homage which she drew;  
Her spirit seemed as seated on a throne  
Apart from the surrounding world, and strong  
In its own strength.”

Myrrha in “Sardanapalus” is a heroine of the antique type, beautiful and splendid-souled, rousing the luxurious monarch to lofty action.

If Byron had possessed the instincts of a great dramatist, he could never have surrendered himself to the bondage of the so-called “unities.” Yet on the whole he may instinctively have felt that these laws furnished him with certain artificial restraints, helpful to his desultory though intense genius; serving as a kind of blow-pipe to concentrate its flame upon one supreme moment. It is indeed difficult to deliver a verdict on the dramas. For “Sardanapalus” is a

very fine play, and "Marino Faliero" shows real dramatic power, yet is scarcely a good drama; while the "Two Foscari" is dull and wooden, and "Werner" a mere plagiarism. The blank verse of Byron's dramas is probably the worst ever written by a great poet; the lines end in the awkwardest of monosyllabic parts of speech "ands" "ofs," &c. There is no harmonious flexibility and resonance in the metre at all; and there is a quantity of tedious prose cut up into lengths. The motive in "Marino Faliero" strikes one as inadequate to support the play's action, as Byron has represented that motive; he has not skilfully made us feel the mixed half unconscious influences that probably prompted the old Doge. Yet the fiery old man is finely drawn, and the scene where he reveals himself to the conspirators in their midnight meeting is full of stormy power, and thoroughly true to nature, the conflict of feelings in the old man as an aristocrat in such a position being subtly realised. Here again Byron draws from within. The concluding scene (the execution) is eminently *picturesque*. But "Sardanapalus" is certainly a very fine play—a great dramatic success, though it is, perhaps, hardly equal to Otway, "The Cenci," Sheridan, or the only great English play of recent times, Sir Henry Taylor's "Philip van Artevelde." In "Sardanapalus," however, we behold (so far as the "unities" allow) the march of tragic historic events, and these have a palpable influence in developing the character of a luxurious, effeminate, yet amiable, generous, and ultimately heroic monarch. Myrrha, moreover, the grand Greek maiden, together with Salemenes, the stern honest warrior, who, though but a sketch, is life-like and well-realised, have a noble influence upon the king, who can appreciate their elevated characters. There is a weak side to the play, no doubt, as Bishop Heber pointed out—in the group of Arbaces, and Beleses the priest, who are not dramatically represented in their mutual relations with one another. Admirable, however, is the scene wherein Sardanapalus, surprised feasting in his summer pavilion by those rebels whom with indolent good-nature he has half pardoned, starts forth, worthy of his ancestors, an avenging warrior, though too late; calling, however, in his vanity, for a mirror while arming, and for his most bejewelled helmet, as both lighter, more becoming to his delicate beauty, and also more conspicuous to friends and foes, even though it expose him to a death which he half-recklessly courts. Excellent too are the battle scenes, full of lusty movement and all the din of onset. Nowhere has Byron so fully dramatised himself as here, I suspect, though the gloomy phase of his character is suppressed—but the hero is a half-sceptical epicurean, masculine and brave, yet with many a feminine trait.

Whatever our verdict on Byron as dramatist, it remains to be remarked that he was one of the greatest satirists England has produced—three only (if so many) can be elevated to stand beside him—Swift, Pope, and Butler. Thackeray can hardly be placed so



high, nor Dryden, nor Churchill—though as wit he has no doubt other rivals, and as a humorist he is surpassed by Shakspeare and Dickens. But in scathing, savage, half-playful banter—playful as a tiger—in masterful annihilating strokes of witty indignation—he has again a song, as Goethe says, “all his own”—in spite of Pulci and Whistlecraft: he is Apollo discharging his arrows at the Python, Michael with his proud foot upon the body of Satan. The scornful wit of the “Vision of Judgment” is Titanic—as where “Turncoat Southey” offers to Satan to write his life, and Satan declining with a bow, Southey glibly appeals to Michael the Archangel with the same tempting offer. Here is George III.—“*and midst them an old man with an old soul, and both extremely blind.*” Then what terrific lines those are on the Prince Regent, on occasion of his presence at the opening of the coffins of Charles I. and Henry VIII.!

But I admit that “Don Juan” is on the whole Byron’s greatest work. Byron had a good deal of the eighteenth century, and also of the Restoration period about him, after all. The era of the Regency was for scoffing profligacy not at all unlike that of the Restoration, and the congenial literary influence on him, not only of Pope, Dryden, and their bitter personal animosities, but of licentious Restoration dramatists, and of corrupt men like Rochefoucauld, Grammont, and Horace Walpole is very palpable. He was moulded also by English novelists like Smollett and Fielding; certain libertine French novels too reappear in his works. Yet I own “Don Juan” seems to me morality itself compared to a rotten whited sepulchre of a book like “Chesterfield’s Letters.” Still the immoral laxity of tone is not to be denied. If Byron had not led the dissipated life he did, and moved for some time in “good society” also, he could certainly not have written this “man of the world’s” poem, which is that, though something more. But whatever advantage he and Moore may have derived from “knowing life,” it was not a moral one, and there is an odour by no means of sanctity, a rather sulphurous odour indeed, a certain conventional humbug and hollowness and disbelief in good, that clings both to the man and to his writings, simply because, while he spurned the whole lot of enamelled corpses as poet, freeman, and idealist, yet as aristocrat and man of fashion he was half one of them, and even looked up with envy to creatures like Beau Brummell and “the first gentleman in Europe.” This taint has made Byron distasteful to some who should have taken a more comprehensive view; but assuredly Byron has not quite shaken off the polite ceremonies he spurns. In Burns and Shelley you breathe a purer atmosphere. Shelley is a sort of volatile seraph; Burns is inconstant, but ever a true passionate *man*; as Walter Scott is also. If Byron’s head was of gold, his feet were of clay.

For all this, “Don Juan” is one of the world’s great poems.

Byron himself claimed that he had therein produced a true epic ; and I have always thought with some reason. Is it not the epic of that transition period in Europe ? It reflects faithfully that age's varying moods, grave and gay, moods of stirring strife and battle, of enterprise and revelry—its appetite for pleasure, its cynical epicurean scepticism, denial and mockery—together with its opposite mood of sentiment, of pathos, of bitter despair, of nature-worship—its reverence for feudalism, and refinement, and tradition—its revolt in favour of simplicity and plain goodness and common humanity. It revels in war, yet inveighs against the tyranny and barbarism thereof : it reverences the ideal, yet refuses to behold it in life—chiefly on account of its own wanton perverseness, and half *blasé*, half childish irreverence of soul. Even in the poem's very want of artistic proportion, of beginning, middle, or ending proper, in its daring originality of form, metre, and language, it is faithful to the spirit of the time. For Auerbach justly remarks that World-Sorrow, and we should add Negation, or Heine's "*Weltsvernichtung*," cannot produce the perfect work of art. Byron in fact never did. But Don Juan was a well-known modern European Type, of which Byron made his own use : the poet had pitched at last upon the very subject and very manner perfectly adapted to develop his transcendent powers :—

"I rattle on exactly as I'd talk  
With anybody in a ride or walk."

He needed not here to be always up on the heroic stilts whether raised aloft by his theme or no ; and in his graver work the small critics often caught him getting off the high horse in those inevitable intervals of flight when Pegasus wants to crop the earthly grass. And then they assembled shouting that this was a poet with a "bad ear," a careless uncertain poet, with inadequate powers of expression ; for in moments of less lofty emotion a first-rate poet, they tell us, should make mouths and beat the air, and say *pudding*, *prunes*, and *prism*, and many "blessed words" like "*Mesopotamia*," to make the vulgar believe that he is always at the boiling-point of inspiration. If he cannot be always moving, he can at least blow the steam off ostentatiously when he stops. But what perfect English is "Don Juan"—it has always the right word ready. Alas ! how few poets write English now ! In "Don Juan" the metre and language seems to shape itself out of the sense and intent of the narrative ; here the style is to the matter what the foam and impetus and tumult are to the wave. "Don Juan" is diffuse ; its egotistic half chaffy gossip is often empty enough, occasionally even a little tiresome ; but we have always to admire its facile masterfulness of rhyme and metre, while it is always relieved by endless versatility of matter, and changeableness of mood. Cynical it is certainly, and world-weary ; but half its paradox is chaff. There is a vein of rollicking buffoonery through

the whole, which by ponderous moralists is always missed. "I rattle on exactly as I'd talk"—just so, and we know the half grave, half gay nonsense Byron talked. The man was half an Aristophanes, half a Rabelais. His buffoonery at Newstead with the monk's skull for drinking cup, and monk's robes of sackcloth—his dressing up the statues of Neville's Court at Cambridge with surplices—his popping with his pistol at those stone ornaments on the house-roof opposite his own at Missolonghi, till all the old women came howling out to remonstrate with this eccentric Milordo who had arrived to deliver Greece and leave his weary life in their fever jungles—his hilarious practical jokes—all showed the grown-up schoolboy.

If you weep too much over this man, fair ladies and sad young gentlemen, even though he bid you weep, he will look up laughing in your faces and overwhelm you with mockery: you must not take all he sings for gospel; in the very heart of this there is a hollowness and a jeer; and surely he who has laid his hand upon the very heart of God's universe must be, like Byron, both a weeping and a laughing philosopher! Writers have become indeed more radically miserable since Byron. I can hear no merriment in the ghastly "*Contes Drolatiques*" of Balzac—none in the hollow spectral mockery of Heine—none in the splendid putrefaction of Gautier, Baudelaire, and Edgar Poe. After all, Byron is no hysteric young Frenchman to be manipulated by a mistress and shoot himself! His intellectual and emotional range is vast—he can thunder and rave and laugh like the sea. For the rest, as he says himself, if he laughs, it is often that he may not weep. And there is indeed much of bitterness and disappointment in his hilarity—he is still misanthropic, and incredulous of human excellence; but he will try now to disburthen himself of his sorrow by a jest or an epigram. His reckless dissipation, his carnal excesses, may have dimmed his ideal, and he poses before us more as a *roué* man of the world, and a light-hearted sceptic; but after all he cannot always keep the mask on, and when he removes it we behold a great and true man in tears—"Childe Harold" himself, but less egotistic in his thoughts and aims and interests, with maturer digested knowledge of men and things than before; on one side of his face, indeed, a hoary, world-weary sinner, but on the other a still generous, adventurous, high-spirited boy. Nowhere in Byron can I, for my part, perceive the "fiend gloating triumphantly over human frailties," which some profess to see. Rousseau, let alone the Bible, would have taught him better than that, and did teach him better.

In clear, graphic, realistic narrative power, as well as in humour, Byron in "*Don Juan*" reminds one of Chaucer and Boccaccio, while his descriptions of human loveliness have all the luscious luminous colouring of Ovid or Correggio; nay, there never were and never will be such descriptions. The harem scenes are in this respect

unrivalled. Is there anything quite equal to that lovely idyl of Haidee and Juan's love after the shipwreck on the beautiful island? Such incidents as those of the shipwreck, the siege of Ismail, and the intrigue with Donna Julia, have all the *verve* and narrative power of Homer, all his direct reality and breathing life; though there is not here, as in the *Iliad*, one great action dominating all the incidents. But there are certainly traces of development and change in the charming dandy—events and persons are transforming him slowly into the man of the world, though the bloom of generous youth is still on him; he is consummately life-like. Granted that type of character, mobile, eager, superficial, events and persons would have just the kind and amount of influence they have over him. Here, moreover, there is no longer any question of delineating a proud, morose, melancholy genius: all men, if not all women, can sympathise with this hero; he is one of themselves, idealised indeed; but only with the more ordinary popular qualities furbished up and augmented; commonplace, not more than usually intellectual, emotional, or imaginative. This is one of the notable merits of the poem, as a work of art. What though Byron found this petted spoiled personage in himself? Yet no other qualities of his own very heterogeneous personalty, none of those he is accused of being able alone to represent, has he attributed to this pleasant handsome boy. He never makes Juan moralise, or mock, or moan; though he drops him occasionally, and does that himself. The fact is, that genius *must always be*, in some mysterious manner, whatever it represents to the life. Goethe only makes his women, and one or two types of man *live*: the rest he skilfully *imitates*. Shakspeare, on the other hand, was an intellectual and moral miracle. He *lives* in innumerable human types. But we cannot pause to speak of the inexhaustible wit, the pointed epigrams, the scathing scorn, the numerous pithy couplets such as this, in the cantos about English society:—

"There was the Honourable Mrs. Sleep,  
Who seemed a white lamb, and was a black sheep."

In our intellectual, competitive-examination, tradesmanlike, priggish age, it is perhaps possible a little to underrate this Alcibiades kind of hero—natural, adventurous, subtle and supple as a Greek, beautiful, daring, courteous, athletic, tender, half feminine, fascinating—who enjoys life in a buoyant dare-devil way, is not too wise, self-conscious, or scrupulous, to kiss any sweet mouth which beauty, youth, health, and good fortune may raise to his own; nor so afflicted with meta-physical hypochondria, as to lament very long or very loud, when Dame Fortune for a change turns capricious and smites him.\*

\* This commonness, or somewhat theatrical attractiveness of Byron's heroes does in some measure, as has been truly remarked, account for their so swift and unparalleled universal popularity; these heroes appealed, in some degree, to the less-elevated instincts of worship among men—as did Schiller's Robbers. Nevertheless,

I am far from sure that it is *all loss* for ordinary men that they should be got to look for a moment at the world—at life and other countries and other persons, all the nooks and corners of this wonderful young world of ours, through so magical and exhilarating an atmosphere as this of Byron's—should unlearn for awhile the commonness and cant and *ennui* and grey sordid vapidity of their own poor selves—even of what is ostensibly highest and holiest in their existence, yet often circumscribed, dead, and conventional, after all ; though, of course, I acknowledge the danger of so much explosive material being stored where youthful blood is mantling and burning. But, at any rate, a poet who could throw himself so thoroughly into this youthful gaiety of temperament cannot have been, even at this time, the played-out ruined devil which excellent and reverend persons made out—even if he had not proved the contrary by writing the most ideal cantos of Childe Harold, and many other of his most ideal works, at the same time ; and those profoundly pathetic verses on his birthday, only a few days before he died for human freedom.

On the whole, then, Byron is probably a greater English poet than any of his great contemporaries, except Shelley—Milton alone perhaps being their peer among English poets ; though I do not know that it is profitable, or even really possible, to make such comparisons—Chaucer, Burns, Wordsworth, Keats, Coleridge, Tennyson, and some others, having won their own high places, for which it behoves us to be thankful. I have no patience with people who, because they admire Byron, cannot, or say they cannot, admire Tennyson, and *vice versa*. Tennyson, by no means wanting in passion, glowing, rich, rare, intellectual, has given us much Byron did not give. But, assuredly, Shakspeare only towers *above* Byron. Mr. Browning, who believes in Shelley, might remember that Shelley would not have called Byron a “flat-fish” or “cackling goose ;” and Mr. Carlyle, who believes in Goethe, might remember that Goethe said,—“Byron alone I place by my side ; Scott is nothing to him.” (If we take in Scott's prose, however, then Scott must stand by our very highest below Shakspeare.) “There were giants in those days.” Byron, though he had small sympathy with his countrymen, and their foreign politics, for they took the Legitimist orthodox side in continental strife, was still an illustrious “Roman,” and proud of being the citizen of no mean city. He inveighed against “Villainton” and his battles ; but yet the brilliant and gigantic struggles in Europe and in India out of which

viewed with any seriousness, the tragic heroes of Byron have a moral and spiritual significance quite as deep as that of Wallenstein, Macbeth, or Coriolanus. After all, however, his tragic figures are rather ideal types than real men, more like Molière's than like Shakspeare's. And while Harold, Manfred, and Cain are embodied types of fate-stricken human passion, and illimitable imaginative yearning, Don Juan represents “omnivorous appetite for pleasure,” which must soon end in satiety and despair.

his country emerged splendidly victorious doubtless helped to mould his poetry of warlike strife and fiery action. On his travels and in his foreign abodes, moreover, he was constantly in the very focus of civil and international commotion. Byron was English, however, in many respects, notably in his fragmentariness and self-contradiction, in his illogical intellect, in his unsystematic unfinished ruggedness both of mind and style; so one does not wonder at the reaction in his favour now: I do not think he will ever be long out of favour with us. He is a rude mountain-mass, tropically gorgeous, not perfectly symmetrical, a mighty ocean ever and anon bursting through the dykes of our proprieties and devastating our plains; and superfine academic critics will always prefer the dainty finish of men who are lesser poets, though defter craftsmen. Perhaps most of what Byron thought, wrote, and did, was, like his beauty, *mutilated*; but he was a glorious torso, worth a million smirking *petit-mâîtres* in wax; he has the splendid imperfection of an *Æschylus*, a *Shakspeare*, a *Dante*, and a *Hugo*. Of what strange and variously mingled elements was this man formed! the breath of Genius descending from on high upon him, angels and demons perchance having also some unguessed concurrence in so vast a personality. I am often reminded of Chatterton. For was not that child one of the first English prophets of "world-sorrow," after all? Study his modern poems, and those "antiques" with the modern wail piercing through so many of them! conceived as they were in the mystic shadow of old St. Mary's Church. Consider his awful supernatural life of seventeen years—can it be that the sub-chaunter's boy of Bristol did not altogether disappear from the earth after that dark mad agony of Brooke Street?

Wandering one day in the cemetery of Ferrara, Byron found two epitaphs that struck him forcibly.

"Martini Luigi  
Implora Pace."

"Lucrezia Picini  
Implora eterna quiete."

These few words, he comments in a letter, say all that can be said or sought: the dead have had enough of life; all they want is rest, and this they implore. Here is all the helplessness and humble hope and death-like prayer that can arise from the grave. "I hope," he continues, "that whoever may survive me and shall see me put in the foreigners' burying-ground at the Lido, within the fortress of the Adriatic, will have those two words and no more put over me—'Implora Pace!'"

RODEN NOEL.

## MEMOIRS OF A CYNIC.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CONTRASTS."

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### XI.

I MET Lefevre at breakfast the next morning, when he informed me that he had already called on Delorge, and found the infant had died shortly after the termination of the ballet.

"After all," he said, "it is perhaps better it should be so. To have lived to maturity with its debilitated constitution would have been impossible. It is now, poor thing, at rest, and free from the troubles and miseries which would have awaited it in this world, and the labour and anxiety it would have caused its parents. At the same time, I very much fear for the manner in which Delorge will get through his task to-night. I cheered him as well as I could, but I shall view his appearance as Zephyr with great anxiety."

Our breakfast over, Lefevre, as he had promised me the day before, kindly became my guide in visiting the principal monuments, churches, collections of fine arts, and other objects of interest in Turin. This occupied us till somewhat late in the afternoon, when after taking our places in the coupé of the diligence to Milan for the next morning, we separated till dinner-time, Lefevre, as stated in the last chapter, having some business of importance to attend to. In the evening we again attended the theatre. As I had great curiosity to know how Delorge would go through his part, I remained in the box while Lefevre went behind the scenes to see if it would be possible to enter into any satisfactory arrangements with Frasi. Delorge's performance was a singular proof of the duality of the human mind. He danced not only with great vigour, but with great ease, and was abundantly applauded. It was evident to me that throughout he was trying his best to conceal from the audience the real state of his feelings, for, while attentive and careful in the performance of his part, I could frequently perceive a change in his countenance from the set dancer's smile to one of momentary pain. Delorge's performance that evening was a complete success, and at the conclusion, Lefevre's remark came vividly back to me, that frequently an actor whom the audience imagined to be the happiest of mortals when he was on the stage, was carrying within his breast a heart as heavy as lead.

The ballet over, Lefevre returned to the box, and told me he had succeeded in engaging Frasi, and upon one-half the terms she had asked the evening before.

"I don't expect," continued Lefevre, "that she will make any very



great success, but she is a pretty girl, and will become a decided favourite with the Omnibus-box, which, you should understand, frequently performs gratuitously the part of the hired *claque* in a French theatre, the principal difference being that in London the spectators in the Omnibus-box are officers in the Guards, or young men of good family and position, while those in the *parterre* of Paris theatres are generally the lowest of the population. Although between ourselves," he continued, confidentially, "I am not altogether certain whether their occupation is not the more honourable of the two." \*

The next morning, in company with Lefevre, I left Turin. Fortunately we had the whole of the coupé to ourselves. For some time my attention was attracted by the beautiful scenery of the Alps to our left, and the low hills covered with verdure to the right, which gradually subsided into the plains, and it was not till after we had passed Alessandria that any consecutive conversation took place between us. It commenced by my remarking to Lefevre how well Delorge had danced the evening before.

"Yes, poor fellow, he exerted himself wonderfully," said Lefevre; "but he had great difficulty in doing so. I assure you at the beginning of the ballet, before he went on the stage, he was so much depressed I thought he would have broken down. By a violent effort, however, he obtained control over his feelings, and, as you say, succeeded admirably."

"The audience evidently thought so, judging from their applause." I said.

"That of the audience was not the only applause he received," said Lefevre. "All the ballet-girls, standing unseen in the wings, applauded him during his dancing, so that every time he turned, and his eye fell on them, they clapped their hands to keep up his spirits. Even Frasi, notwithstanding the anxiety she was in about her engagement with me, which was not then concluded, had left me, and taken her position among the others, and was as loud in her applause as the rest or even louder."

"After all that is said against them, there appears to be really a great deal of good among these poor creatures," I remarked.

"There is, indeed," said Lefevre, "and far more so than the casual observer would give them credit for. That their sins are many is perfectly true, but a more charitable community than they are I believe never existed. Notwithstanding all the jealousy and spite

\* In the palmy days of the Haymarket Italian Opera, a long box to the left of the proscenium and on a level with the stage was called the Omnibus-box, and was principally filled by young men of family and position. For an outsider to obtain a seat in it was as difficult as to gain admittance into White's or Boodle's Clubs. In it originated the Tamburini Row, and others of a similar description. To secure the good opinion and patronage of the Omnibus-box was always considered a great point with the managers of the opera.

which the women of the stage possess to a proverb, they will frequently bestow even on those to whom they have been the most spiteful the greatest kindness, when they are in distress and no longer their rivals. Even in their most depraved condition, specimens of good feeling will occasionally develop themselves in a manner no one would have expected, and that, too, without the individuals themselves being able to account for their conduct. I have met with many examples of the kind."

"I wish you would narrate to me one or two," I said.

"Well," replied Lefevre, "there was once a certain Carlotta Morlacchi, who was employed some years since, in Monk Mason's time, as a dancer in the ballet. She was as ignorant and uneducated as a low ballerina could be, was very handsome but heavy, and not particularly graceful."

"Of the Scuola Walmoden?" I suggested.

"Exactly," said Lefevre. "I should say that heavy as her body might have been, her character was of the lightest description, and she had many admirers among the patrons of the theatres. One, however, Sir L. S., a man of immense wealth, contrived to engage her entirely for himself, and she ruled over the old blockhead with a despotism of the most absurd, though rigorous description. Whatever Morlacchi required, he was obliged to get; and I really believe that frequently she used to invent things she did not require, or things she had possibly no taste or use for, merely for the fun of exercising her rule over him. One morning, on going to the theatre for the purpose of getting up a new ballet, I was very much out of spirits, and Morlacchi noticing it, inquired the cause. I told her I had witnessed that morning a scene of great sorrow. In an apartment above me lodged a curate, with his wife and three children, who were in the deepest poverty. I would willingly have relieved them, I said, but they were such a nice amiable family, and of so high a tone, that I did not like to offer them any assistance. 'And why not?' she asked. 'Because I should be afraid of hurting their feelings,' I replied. 'Hurt a person's feelings by giving them anything!' Morlacchi remarked; 'why, I never heard of such a thing. I take everything offered to me, and never feel the slightest sorrow in doing so. But neither you nor I need put ourselves to any trouble in this matter. Find out in what way they can be benefited, and I will make Sir L. S. assist them. They will be under no obligation to either of us, nor to Sir L. S. himself, for he would never do it from any good feeling on his own part.'

"Although," continued Lefevre, "I was somewhat puzzled to see the force of Morlacchi's argument, I made inquiries of the landlady of the house in what manner the poor family could be benefited without hurting their feelings. 'I hardly know,' said the landlady. 'They are very badly off, in fact half starving, and it is a great injury to me, for they owe me three weeks' rent, and I can ill afford

to lose the money.' 'But can you not tell me more about them?' I asked. 'Well, the fact is, he came up to town hoping to get a curacy, but has been unsuccessful; and now, I think, they are at their wit's-end to know what to do.' The next morning, Morlacchi asked me more about them, and whether she could not do something to assist them. 'Nothing at all, I am afraid,' I replied: 'though very poor, I suspect they are also proud. He is a curate, and wishes to obtain some employment, and I don't think, Cara, church matters are much in your way.' 'I'm afraid not,' said Morlacchi, looking serious. 'However, I'll try what I can do before I give it up;' and we then went on with the rehearsal.

"The next morning when we met, Morlacchi wore a most amiable and pleasing expression on her countenance. 'Caro maestro,' she said, 'I think I have succeeded. I find Sir L. S. has what is called a "living" in his gift, which is now vacant. Get me the particulars of the poor curate, and I will insist on his aiding him to obtain it.' 'And how will you do that?' I asked, feeling at the same time somewhat nervous at the idea of employing such an agency as Morlacchi in so serious a matter. 'I'll tell him I want it done,' she said, 'and if he won't, I'll quarrel with him. Ah, don't you be afraid, I'll have my own way. I see you doubt me, but it will turn out as I say.' Well," continued Lefevre, "I did make the inquiries, and, having put the whole on paper, gave it to Morlacchi. She applied to her old admirer, who treated the application with contempt. She did quarrel with him, as she promised to do, and at the end of a few days the old blockhead not only made her several presents, but agreed to give the curate the living. And here the singular portion of Morlacchi's behaviour breaks out. She not only insisted on my keeping secret from the curate by whose agency the living had been obtained, but on Sir L. S. doing the same, and the curate had not the slightest idea what patronage had been at work in his favour.

"Another singular point exhibited itself in Morlacchi's conduct," continued Lefevre. "On the very day the curate was inducted into the living, she broke off all acquaintance and connection with her old admirer, nor during her stay in England would she ever renew it, although the offers he made her were of the most lavish description. Now I hold that there must have been some profound respect for the church and holy things concealed in that woman's mind, without her being able in any possible manner even to explain to herself the motive power which influenced her."

(I may here add that some years since, and long after Sir L. S.'s death, the curate accidentally came under my notice, and I indirectly elicited from him that he had always been ignorant of the reason which had made Sir L. S. choose him for the living, no two human beings being more unlikely to have the slightest sympathy existing between them.)

Lefevre mentioned to me many similar incidents, but as some I

afterwards met with myself strongly resembled them, I will not waste time by describing those he related to me.

Of course travelling by diligence we had but little time to see the different towns through which we passed, much to my regret, as I wished to have stopped at Pavia. However, before leaving Italy, I had an opportunity afforded me of seeing that city. We arrived at Milan in the afternoon of the following day, and took up our abode at Reichmann's Hotel, at that time much frequented by the officers of the Austrian garrison. Before the time for the *table d'hôte*, Lefevre conducted me to the Duomo, and two or three other principal objects in the city, and we then returned to the hotel.

Dinner over, Lefevre proposed we should go to the theatre. At that time there were two theatres in Milan, the Cannobiana and the Carcano, the former giving Italian comedy and ballet, the latter only operas. On the evening of our arrival the Carcano was open, and the performance advertised was the first two acts of Bellini's opera of "I Capulletti," and the third by Vaccai. To this theatre we went, and there I had another love-attack, which, though it was one of a very innocent description, had circumstances connected with it which remained indelibly fixed on my mind. At first sight I felt desperately in love with the prima donna, if the soprano of that opera really bears the title, but I believe it belongs to the contralto. Juliet was a lovely girl, with a clear beautiful voice, which she managed most artistically. I was on the point of saying that Romeo's love for her was trifling when compared with my own, but the confession would be an absurdity, for the two lovers "hated with a hate known only on the stage." This feeling was evidently occasioned by the animosity of Romeo, who, finding Juliet a far greater favourite with the public than herself, took every opportunity in her power to spite her rival. This was apparent to all, though few seemed to interest themselves in the matter, jealousy of the kind being very common in the theatrical profession. At the same time it made Juliet still more interesting in my eyes, and I believe did her no harm with the public at large.

Lefevre had secured for us the stage box on a level with the actors, so that we not only saw everything going forward on the stage itself, but in the wings as well. I certainly at first sight was much struck with Juliet, and she evidently noticed me. In fact, the occult sympathy which exists between lovers, began, I am fully persuaded, to pass between us before the end of the opera. She evidently detected that I admired her, and I felt that she understood my feelings, and was pleased with them. So marked, indeed, was the glance she gave at our box, when, after the opera, she was called on the stage to make her obeisance to the audience, that Lefevre noticed it, and told me, as we quitted the theatre, that I had made a conquest there that evening.

Lefevre, I should remark, had paid but little attention to the performance. In fact, he seemed as a rule totally unimpressible to the charms of music, while greatly alive to those of the ballet, and that, be it understood, solely from an artistic point of view, as, from all I could learn, he had formed but few intimacies among the members of the corps. This was clearly visible the following evening when we visited the Cannobiana. He was then much interested in the ballet, his eyes never quitting the stage during the whole of the time, unless, perchance, to call my attention to some beauty or defect which he saw. To say the truth, I began to get a little tired of his criticisms. All appeared to me beautiful and graceful, and it was somewhat annoying to have these illusions destroyed. The next evening we again took our box at the Carcano, and Juliet had hardly made her appearance on the stage, when I noticed her eyes turned towards us. The performance went off in as satisfactory a manner as on the former evening, and she evidently noticed me as emphatically as before. I may say that during a whole fortnight, on every representation of the opera, I was present in the box, and on each occasion my admiration for the fair Juliet increased. I felt, though without anything more reliable to go upon than the glances she occasionally gave me, that my affection was not without return. At last I explained to Lefevre that I should like to be introduced to my fair Juliet. He told me there would be no difficulty in the matter, and took me round the stage for that purpose. But alas! a great difficulty arose. Juliet only spoke Italian, and I knew but little of that language. Possibly Juliet might have overlooked that circumstance, or kindly have taught me her own language, but with my keen sense of the ridiculous, the idea of making love in a language of which I scarce knew a score of sentences, seemed to me so absurd, that I gave it up altogether, and contented myself with feasting my eyes on her from my box. Night after night found me still in the same place, and each night I admired Juliet more than the previous one. She was tall, thin, pretty, and graceful, and her girlish figure contrasted most favourably with that of Romeo, who was evidently expecting soon to be a mother.

Romeo appeared to notice my partiality for Juliet, and by way of annoying her, first attempted to attract my attention from her by what is technically termed "playing" at my box; but finding that fail, she changed her tactics, and adopted a plan which could only have entered the imagination of a vindictive woman, and that woman an Italian actress.

The very evening she carried into effect her detestable plot she appeared to be in particularly good spirits; she sang with great care and animation. But I do not know how it was that in her grand air, each time she repeated the words *La tremenda ultrice spada*, she gave a particularly significant look at me. All passed off well till

the third act, both Romeo and Juliet being very much applauded. The scene in the mausoleum of the Capulets opened. Romeo came on the stage evidently in high spirits, totally contrary to what his feelings should have been on the occasion. He wore his plumed hat even more rakishly than before, and his moustaches and imperial seemed to have acquired between the acts an additional coat of burnt-cork and grease.

The tomb was broken open, and Juliet appeared stretched as a corpse on the grave-stone within it. Romeo then entered into the spirit of the scene, and after singing his adagio extremely well, he sucked the poison from the ring, and casting his hat upon the stage, he rushed towards the apparently inanimate Juliet. Then clasping her head on each side with his hands, he gave her a long and passionate kiss. Juliet, awakened by his embrace, rose from her tombstone, and Romeo in terror sunk upon his knees, as if he had seen her spirit ; thus leaving Juliet in full view of the audience.

No sooner did Juliet stand erect, than the treason of which she had been the victim became fully apparent. The audience burst into a loud laugh, and, annoyed as I was, I could not refrain from joining in it. Poor Juliet, when she received Romeo's kiss, received at the same time an exact *fac simile* of his moustaches and imperial. No copying machine could have taken them off more perfectly. Her appearance was thoroughly absurd. She was immediately aware of the fact, and of course was dreadfully annoyed. She turned mechanically towards me as if for consolation, and found me laughing too. The poor girl looked reproachfully at me for a moment, and then placing her hands upon her face burst into tears. The audience immediately applauded her greatly, and the performance abruptly terminated.

I went home that night thoroughly annoyed and ashamed. My behaviour appeared to me both unkind and ungentlemanly, and I determined the next night to make amends for my unworthy conduct. I then applauded everything she did, but it was useless, for she did not honour me with a single glance. Three or four successive nights I was in my place, but Juliet was inexorable. For several nights I attended the theatre with no better success, till at last the performances were brought to a close by the premature confinement of Romeo. During my stay in Milan I saw nothing more of Juliet ; but some two years afterwards I met her and her mother walking on the ramparts at Modena. Her mother evidently recognised me, and called Juliet's attention to my presence. Not the slightest change however, came over her countenance, although no doubt she saw me. As I passed them I took off my hat to her, but she took no notice of my salutation, but, acting admirably, appeared to think it was some one else I was addressing. I met her no more, but my behaviour to poor Juliet has always weighed heavily upon

my mind. Although I may have committed many far heavier sins, which have long since been forgotten, my unworthy behaviour to poor Juliet that evening remains as fresh on my mind as at the moment it occurred.

## XII.

LEFEVRE remained in Italy for about a month or six weeks. He did not reside in Milan during the whole of the time, but made it his head-quarters, occasionally visiting, for two or three days at a time, at Bergamo, Brescia, Modena, Pavia, and other towns, where he thought it likely he might be able to pick up a talented dancer at a moderate price. When in Milan we remained excellent friends, attending one or other of the theatres open every evening; and thanks to his knowledge and experience of the stage, in a very short time I became so completely *au fait* in matters of the kind that, had I thought fit, I was able to act the impresario myself. To speak candidly, on more than one occasion during my residence in Italy such an idea did enter my head, although I never carried it into practice. I also admit that I had now lost all wish to commence the study of the law, if in fact any real wish for it ever existed, for now, when I think coolly over the matter, I believe my determination to adopt the law as a profession arose considerably more from its giving an honourable status in society than from any real love I bore it.

During my residence in Milan I remained at Reichmann's Hotel—indeed, I took a great liking to many of the guests I met there. Altogether, it hardly came up to our modern ideas of an hotel, for although travellers passing through Milan often stopped there, it partook rather more of the nature of a club-house for officers in the Austrian service. I formed the acquaintance of many of these, and a more gentlemanly or more accomplished body of men, I think I never met with. Among them also were several of my own countrymen, officers holding appointments in (I think) the 7th Regiment of Hungarian Hussars, of which the Duke of Wellington was colonel. Many of them tried to inoculate me with a love for a military life, but not with any success, beyond the fact that I used to attend with them the rooms of a celebrated fencing-master, where I myself took lessons, as the immediate neighbourhood of Milan, or its streets when once known, offered but little temptation for exercise. I may say without vanity that in a few months I became an expert swordsman—certainly with the sabre, which was the principal weapon studied by the officers in the Austrian service. The use of the sabre was also much affected by the Milanese gentleman, why, at first, I hardly knew, but I afterwards, to my sorrow, found out the cause—it was the weapon principally used in duels, which were then



of frequent occurrence between the Milanese gentlemen and the Austrian officers.

Although my time was passed in idleness in Milan, it would have been impossible to call me lazy, for, apart from fencing, which I studied assiduously, I also applied myself earnestly to acquire the Italian language. Tassani, my teacher, was a young law student of Pavia, who had just left the University. He was an amiable, kind-hearted, talented young fellow, about my own age. His parents, though highly respectable, were poor, and by way of maintaining himself, as he was too young to obtain any briefs, he gave lessons in the Italian language to several French and English students, all of whom esteemed him very highly. As he gave me two lessons a day, it may easily be imagined I made rapid progress in the language. One circumstance in Tassani's behaviour puzzled me extremely. When he came to give me his lesson he always rushed upstairs into my room with so much celerity that he was generally quite out of breath, and left it again in the same rapid manner. If I met him in the street and attempted to speak to him, he always appeared in a great hurry and excused himself, although when in my room he would converse volubly enough. He seemed shy of receiving any civility at my hand, and frequently as I asked him to dine with me at the *table d'hôte*, on every occasion he refused, always urging some excuse, and this so pertinaciously that I was exceedingly puzzled, for evidently his reasons were invented on the spur of the moment. However, I became tired of continually giving him invitations which were not accepted, so I determined to invite him no more, although my esteem for him in no way diminished.

At last a circumstance occurred which necessitated my asking Tassani for an explanation. One evening when passing the Café Martini I saw him seated at one of the tables in front of the building in conversation with some Milanese gentlemen. His eye evidently caught mine, but instead of replying to my salutation, he pretended not to see me, and kept his eye fixed on the table conversing with his friends. This nettled me so much that I determined not to pass it unnoticed, so advancing towards him, I put my hand on his shoulder, and addressed some casual remark to him in a familiar manner. He appeared somewhat surprised, and even annoyed, and rising from his seat, he said in a courteous tone of voice, "Will you have the kindness to excuse me, as I wish to speak to a friend inside?" The others at the table took no notice, and I went away.

The next morning when Tassani called to give me his lesson, with considerable coolness in my manner I asked for an explanation of his conduct the day before. He civilly told me there would have been no occasion for me to have put the question, as he could easily understand I was offended, and he intended to explain himself unasked.

"The fact is," he said, "with your light hair and fair complexion,

soldierly look, and continually frequenting the society of the Austrian officers, you are set down by the Milanese as holding a commission in the army."

"In what manner would it concern them," I inquired, "even were their conclusion correct? I should have been a member of as honourable a body of gentleman as any I know."

"Granted," he replied; "for as far as honourable conduct goes, I admit you to be right. But if you intend remaining any length of time in Milan, you must select either Austrian or Milanese society. There can be no mixture."

"And why not?" I asked.

"Simply because it is impossible to imagine in this world a more deadly hatred existing between two classes of human beings than the Austrians and Milanese. I am very glad you have spoken to me on the subject," he continued, "for now we shall understand each other. I have a great respect for you and your talents, but, as long as you remain in this hotel and associate with Germans, it will be impossible for me to be on terms of friendship with you abroad, much as I esteem you. I will tell you candidly more than this. The money I receive for the lessons I give you is of great importance to me—more so than you perhaps would imagine—but rather than associate with you when we meet in the streets or public thoroughfares, I would cease my lessons altogether."

Although much surprised at Tassani's language, I could not do otherwise than compliment him on his candour. I told him I should be content with his latent good feeling, under condition that he promised, if we met in any other town, our friendship might be open and unreserved. To this he agreed, and we commenced the lesson. In the evening I mentioned the circumstance to Lefevre, who seemed by no means surprised at it.

"The fact is, I suspect," he said, "that it is the state of Tassani's finances that has driven him to give you lessons at all in this hotel, for every time he enters, and is seen by any of his acquaintances, a suspicion arises in their minds that he is an Austrian spy."

"But he has never once spoken to me on any political subject," I remarked.

"No matter," said Lefevre. "Less cause than Tassani has given for a suspicion of the kind has brought on a duel among the Milanese themselves. As I know an immense number of people here in Milan, I will give out to all those who are likely to chatter most at the *specarias* or cafés, that you are an Englishman, and not in any manner whatever connected with Austria or Austrian politics, that you are a friend of mine, a great admirer of theatres, and only here to amuse yourself. I have no doubt you will then find that any unpleasant feeling, if it has at all arisen, will soon vanish; although you

cannot expect to enter into any Milanese society as long as you remain in Reichmann's Hotel."

I should mention that besides the German officers whose acquaintance I had made, I was also on terms of intimacy with two English gentlemen, engineers, residing in Milan. One of them possessed immense silk works in the Pian d'Erba, a lovely spot half way between the towns of Como and Lecco. Occasionally I visited him there, and anything more beautiful than the scenery it would be impossible for the imagination to conceive. Although an Englishman, he was an excellent Italian scholar; and in the immediate neighbourhood of the silk works resided several wealthy Milanese families by whom he was much esteemed, so that I had abundant society as well as practice in speaking the Italian language. On one occasion I remained for two months there, and when I returned to Milan I took up my residence in an Italian hotel. Thanks to the acquaintance I had formed in the Pian d'Erba I was not now so completely tabooed by the Milanese as before, although I still perceived they looked on me with considerable shyness. Somewhat annoyed at this circumstance I became more intimate than ever with the Austrian officers, and continued in their fencing class, till few among them were better swordsmen than myself. For what earthly purpose beyond the advantage of exercise I laboured so hard, I am now unable to divine. I continued my lessons also with Tassani, and the more I saw of him the more I liked him. As he was no longer in danger of meeting any Germans, he now frequently dined with me at the *table d'hôte*, and a strong intimacy sprung up between us.

I will not detain the reader with any account of my first twelve months' residence in Italy; in fact, it would be impossible. The time now seems to me to have passed like a delicious dream without continuity, and yet hardly any circumstance was connected with it that was not pleasant. During the year I principally resided in Milan, visiting occasionally the surrounding towns. Tassani and myself were by this time warm friends. He also was passionately fond of the theatre, though our tastes as to the particular performances were somewhat different. My delight was in a good opera, and the ballet also afforded me much pleasure. For tragedy or comedy I had less respect, and this arose from several causes. In the first place, the frequent habit of changing the performance, the same piece rarely being played more than two nights in succession, never allowed the actors to identify themselves thoroughly with their parts, and they showed great indifference to learning them by heart. And indeed it would have been difficult for them to have done so, for the *répertoire* of an Italian dramatic company, for merely one season, contained in it such an immense variety of subjects as totally precluded their arriving at perfection in any. The prompter, instead of performing his duties, as in an English theatre, by merely following the actors

with the manuscript in his hand, and assisting them when in fault, positively read the whole piece in advance of them, and that in a sufficiently loud key as to be frequently heard by the whole house. Again, another objectionable feature was the affected, conventional tone in which they spoke, certainly different from real life, which to me, when I began to thoroughly understand the language, had frequently a very ludicrous effect.

What greatly surprised me was that Tassani did not appear to notice these defects, but would listen evening after evening with the greatest delight to the performance. One day I spoke to him on the subject, and informed him of the great superiority of our manner of performing plays in England, where an actor identifies himself with his part in such a manner that you would hardly distinguish his performance from real life.

"As far as your objection goes to the continual change of performance," said Tassani, "and the uncertainty of the actors in their parts without the continual aid of the prompter, I perfectly agree with you. Possibly also you may not be wrong in your opinion as to the stilted and affected tone of our actors and actresses. Still, with us it is conventionally admitted to be good. Although I consider it to be absurd, I am now so used to it that I think nothing of it. But are you English," he continued, "free from blame in the matter? I once, a few years since, passed a week in Paris, where there was an English play, and in it I saw some of your celebrated actors. Frankly, they thoroughly disgusted me. I had read several translations of Shakespeare in the Italian language, and indifferent as they might have been, I had conceived an immense respect for the habitual natural language in which they were written, elevated by beautiful ideas and elegant similes, which, if expressed in a natural tone of voice, would have been perfectly delightful. But upon the stage there appeared throughout the whole an exaggerated accent and artificial tone that quite disappointed me. At the same time I noticed that the audience—the English portion at least—seemed to consider it perfectly adapted to the occasion."

Of course, as an Englishman, and with English ideas, I could not agree with Tassani's objections, though I said nothing on the point; but contented myself with asking him why, if he and other educated individuals, considered the affected tone used by the tragic actors as objectionable, they did not attempt to introduce a new fashion.

"You don't know the difficulty there would be in doing anything of the kind," said Tassani, laughing. "I was vain enough some two or three years since to think such a thing possible, and tried to furnish an example, but hardly succeeded in doing so, and I was, moreover, the cause of raising considerable ill-will in my family."

"How was that?" I inquired.

"My father had a brother, a physician," replied Tassani, "who

some twenty years ago fell desperately in love with an actress, whom he married, sorely to the discontent of my father, who conceived such an union a *mésalliance*. However, she made him an excellent wife, and things passed off smoothly enough. His wife, of course, quitted the stage on her marriage, but she always continued her love for the old profession, which she entered into with the spirit of an artist. When I was a boy, she used to assist me in getting up a paste-board theatre, and aid me with the puppets, I being of course the mouth-piece of all the male actors, and Clelia, the daughter, that of the female. As we grew older the performances began to be somewhat more ambitious. We would then play scenes from Alfieri and others of our best writers. Clelia had a remarkably sweet voice, and her mother, who held also that the conventional tone used in our tragedies and comedies was objectionable, taught her to recite her part in a natural manner. Later we put aside the puppets, and played scenes from different pieces, taking the parts ourselves. My aunt was always present at the time, combining in her own person not only the parts of audience and prompter, but frequently herself reciting portions of the play, when a third character should have been on the stage. I must frankly admit that I was guilty of concealing these performances from my father and mother, who, although, like most other Milanese, passionately fond of the theatre, held its artists in but little estimation.

"All went on well till Clelia was about seventeen years of age, when her father died suddenly, and, on examining his affairs, he was found to be little better than insolvent; his widow and child, in fact, hardly receiving sufficient to purchase mourning. The question then arose, what was to be done? My father's income and my expenses at college placed it practically out of his power to assist them, except in a most moderate manner, not sufficient for the bare maintenance of life. It was therefore necessary that the widow should do something to maintain herself and child. But, alas! what could she do? She had been but a comedy actress, and was now too old for that, and consequently it would have been useless for her to have returned to her old profession. For some time she remained in doubt which course to take, when Clelia, who dearly loved her mother, asked permission to try her own career on the stage. 'I feel, dear mother, I should succeed if I did,' she said. 'And I should then have the satisfaction of returning, in some degree, the affection I have received from you.'

"Her mother," continued Tassani, "would willingly have entertained the idea, but feared the displeasure of my father, and I was consulted on the occasion. I, enthusiastic for the theatre, advised Clelia to carry out her determination, and her mother also gave her permission. When, however, the subject was mooted to my father, he flew into a violent passion, and said that if such a course were adopted,

all further acquaintance should cease between him and the widow. He also blamed me severely for the part I had taken in the matter, as he had heard I approved of Clelia adopting the stage as a profession, and the result was that a violent quarrel took place between us, the first, and I am happy to say the only one, which has ever disturbed the good feeling which should exist between father and son."

"And how has your cousin succeeded?" I asked.

"Not as well as might have been wished," he said. "She has, however, done so sufficiently to encourage her to continue in her profession. She would have succeeded better, in fact, had it not been for the gigantic task she took upon herself of introducing a more natural tone of voice on the stage. Unfortunately she has rather delicate health, and her voice is hardly strong enough to fill a large theatre, so up to the present time she has not had an opportunity of making a thoroughly good *début*."

"Where is she now?" I inquired.

"Somewhere in the south of Italy," he replied. "The last time I heard from her she was at Rome, and seeking an engagement in some country town. When you go southward I will give you a letter to her, and then you will be able to judge for yourself whether I have in any manner over-stated her ability and attractions."

Tassani now introduced me to his father and mother; and although they received me with great kindness, I cannot say I found them an amiable couple. On more than one occasion I spent the evening with them, when the conversation, as usual in Milanese society, principally turned on the opera. As an Englishman of course I felt interested in politics, but Tassani's father, with the natural Italian suspicion, declined speaking on a subject which might be likely to implicate him in any manner. On noticing this to Tassani he told me that I could hardly imagine how trifling a remark would sometimes get an innocent person into trouble, and that his father was already suspected by the Austrian government of being ill-affected towards them. I remarked that no doubt it was a subject of extreme annoyance that the governors of Italy differed from the people not only in nationality but in modes of thought. At the same time, I said, the Italians appeared to me to have but little to complain of. During the time I had been in Milan, not one single despotic action had come under my notice, and their laws and regulations could not be so very objectionable, seeing there was not a more flourishing town in Italy, and perhaps in Europe, than Milan.

"It's all very well," said Tassani, "for you Englishmen to speak about the liberty you enjoy here; but because no restrictions are placed on you, it does not follow we are free from them. I tell you that the tyranny of these Austrians is insupportable; and not only that, but their means of exercising it are full of such petty malice, that it adds contempt to our hatred. I will give you a specimen of what

occurred to me, and hundreds of similar instances might be quoted. In a certain public procession in which the military took part, there was an Austrian Colonel of the Lancers whose uniform, absurd enough in itself, fitted him so badly as to excite the laughter of many of the bystanders. I remarked to a friend as the officer passed us, that 'he looked more like a *pulcinello* than anything else.' The next morning, I had a polite invitation, really worded in a most civil manner, to attend at the police court. I presented myself, and was received by the Chief, a Tyrolese, with great courtesy. He much regretted, he said, having troubled me, but he had received information that I had uttered a disrespectful remark concerning the Austrian army the day before, and he trusted I should be able to prove that the information was erroneous. I candidly admitted the remark I made, but insisted that it related solely to the officer in question, and that I did not mean any intentional disrespect to the Austrian service. 'Well, I'm very pleased to hear you say so,' he said. 'That is no very great fault certainly. At the same time I must compare your reply with the accusation, and, until that is finished, I am sorry to say I must detain you, but it will only be for a very short time.' I was then removed to a cell in the prison of St. Margharita, where I remained for one fortnight, not allowed even to communicate with my friends or parents, who, as you may naturally suspect, were most anxious at my absence. The Chief then sent for me again, and, receiving me with great urbanity, said, he was pleased to find my statement had been correct; and, after regretting the inconvenience he had put me to, said he would detain me no longer."

"Do you mean to say that occurrences of that kind are frequent here?" I inquired.

"Not only here," replied Tassani, "but all over Lombardy and Venetia. Such cases might be quoted by hundreds, so you may easily believe the hatred we bear the Austrians is not without provocation."

A few days afterwards a circumstance occurred which gave me an insight into the rigour of the Austrian policy in Italy. I had heard that a copy of the 'Times' newspaper might, on payment, be seen in Milan at the Government Gazette office, that journal being prohibited by the police at the *cafés*. I immediately offered to become a subscriber, but they told me they could not accept my subscription without permission from the police, and that if I called the following day no doubt it would be received. I did so, and my subscription being paid, I was conducted down a long passage to a door opening into a room, the whole furniture of which consisted but of a table, an inkstand, and two or three chairs. On the table lay a file of the 'Times' newspaper. My conductor told me I could remain as long as I pleased, and when I was tired of reading, if I rang the bell he would open the door and let me out. He then quitted the room, and, locking the door after him, I was left to myself.



Some time later I had a specimen of Austrian rule in Italy, which, in my opinion, was about as infamous and tyrannical an act as could possibly be imagined. Indeed, after it was over, the Austrian police forbade any mention being made of it in the few non-official journals then published in Italy. In the Piazza d'Armi is a large amphitheatre, open to the sky, built by the first Napoleon, something after the model of the Coliseums of Rome and Verona, though the walls were not so high. A *spectacle* was advertised to be performed in it, called *L'Incendio de Rokeby*, professedly taken from Sir Walter Scott, although there was little in the performance to justify the assertion. The place was crowded with spectators. There was a castle made of painted canvas on a wooden frame in the centre, which was to be defended by one body of actors and attacked by the other. The performance, however, was of the most unsatisfactory description — everything went wrong. All the manœuvres were badly performed, the fireworks by which the castle was to be burnt down would not explode properly, and the whole affair was a miserable failure. The audience, however, put up with it good-naturedly for some time, but their patience at last gave way. After expressing their disapprobation in a most emphatic manner, a number of young scapegraces determined, as the castle had not been destroyed, they would do it themselves, and descended into the arena for that purpose, the great mass of spectators — especially the women — quitting the place during the time. Tassani's mother and a female friend having been sitting near me, I conducted them to the door, and, after wishing them good evening, returned to witness the termination of the affair. To my surprise, on entering the *loggione*, in which I had been seated, I saw that the whole of the top circle of the walls had, during my absence, been lined with a row of soldiers. No notice was taken of them, however, by the crowd in the arena, not a tithe of whom were engaged in the destruction of the canvas castle, but merely looking laughingly on. Suddenly there was an order given by the commanding officer for the soldiers to fire, who levelled their muskets on the crowd in the arena, and fired a volley at them. The crowd, terror-struck, immediately rushed out of the building, but not before they had received a second volley from the military, who, not even content with that, turned and fired at the fugitives as they made their way through the trees that surrounded the arena. How many were killed I know not, but in the arena alone, I certainly saw at least thirty of the spectators who had been shot down, and that for being mixed up in an affair which a dozen London policemen would not have drawn their truncheons to put down. The next morning the Government Gazette merely noticed that the evening before a slight disturbance had arisen at the arena, but the military having been called in, it was soon and effectually quelled. God knows it was!

## WANTED, AN ENGLISHMAN.

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It is not always that an appeal for sympathy, or at lowest for candour, when one is about to attempt a difficult and delicate task, meets with a favourable response. But I have some, though not strong, hopes that I shall meet with a little both of sympathy and candour on the present occasion. This is a very commonplace opening, and reads something like an electioneering address, but the matters to which I am about to refer demand so much caution that I am afraid of pitching the key too high.

It is part of the misfortune of the case that any such caution should be necessary, and that a public writer should have to appeal specially to any one's candour in such a matter. And how have we, within the last twenty years, arrived at the state of things which creates such a misfortune? That would be a dreary story to tell; but the fact is, to put things shortly, we have arrived at a state of flogged-up public opinion and an anarchy of fanatical combinations and chance majorities, each majority of the hour snatching what it can, and justice being hustled out of sight with its hat over its eyes. In spite of our free and enlightened press, I believe there never was a time—making the due allowances all round—when it was so difficult, I will not say for minorities, but for the real majorities to get a hearing. Nor is there any paradox here. It is the organization of cliques, the quarrels of vested interests, and the transitional state of the press which for the time give chance majorities, well worked, the upper hand, whatever the real majority might have to say in a given case. And there are certain "cries" which, in such a state of things, can be worked so as to intimidate nearly everybody. Public morality is a cry of that order; and I only refrain from mentioning others because my field of comment is already quite wide enough. We have now come definitely to that pass that when once the cry of public morals is raised the simplest rules of common justice are forgotten. Juries have lost their heads. Nobody can admire our Judges more than I do, but even they have too often shown of late that they are a little intimidated by what is in the air. Anything more scandalously immoral than the verdicts which have in increasing numbers been given of late years in breach-of-promise cases can hardly be imagined; yet juries give them in the interests of what they suppose to be public morality. In the last case of the kind I happened to read, there was as clear a case of conspiracy to extort money from the victim as ever sent a scoundrel to prison, yet the damages were given. In actions of another kind, which we need not

describe, the verdicts have been monstrous. I saw in some newspaper the other day, à propos of the well-known French prints, Phryne and Penelope, that the superiority of English to French morality was shown by the fact, that while Phryne sold better in France, Penelope sold better in England. The remark was a profoundly stupid one, for the Penelope picture is a poor insipid thing without the Phryne at hand to throw light upon it. But that is not my point, which is this:—If the English genius is so fond of Penelope, why does it award such tremendous damages to Phryne as to create a class of adventuresses who trade on the morality of juries? One or two of the judges have set their faces against this sort of thing—a little; but I remember an instance in which one of the best of them peremptorily shut the mouth of the defendant, who was under examination by counsel, when he was just beginning a most important statement in his own behalf. He was told by the judge to forbear, for decency's sake, and his counsel had the moral cowardice to acquiesce. The statement the witness was about to make, was such, that a jury, believing it, would have been mad to give the plaintiff a farthing: but what was the effect of this interference of the judge in the name of "decency"? Just this:—A thick-headed jury thought to themselves, "Why, what a wicked man this must be when the judge calls him indecent!" and they gave the hussy swinging damages; though the defendant had offered her fully as much as on the severest view of the case she could claim, and though there was a moral certainty that this adventuress would better the instruction thus afforded to her, and go and lay out her damages in flying at still higher game.

I request the reader to notice here, and to bear in mind all the way through this paper (for I hope he will read it through), that the writer of these lines is no cynic in these or any other matters. No one can have a loftier ideal of domestic purity than I; no one a more passionate respect for women; no one a stronger feeling of privacy and self-respect in all such matters. But I do not believe in the promotion of what is called public virtue by methods which tend to the submerging of common justice. And I am about to refer to two recent cases at the Middlesex Sessions,—one in particular,—in which we find a defendant actually pleading guilty against the advice of his counsel, against the clear law of the case, against the pretty plainly expressed opinion of the judge himself. I confess I could scarcely believe my eyes when I read the story. Is this England? What were this defendant's notions of his duty to his countrymen? And if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Mr. Torrens and Mr. Vernon Harcourt, and a few others, have had in the House of Commons to blush for the London School Board (for getting a clause into their act throwing the burden of proof, in a certain respect, on the prosecuted person), and well they might.

But how deep are we to blush when Englishmen, innocent before the law, plead guilty under social intimidation?

There is an organization of informers which goes by the name of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Now it is a good thing that vice should be suppressed, but it is not quite so good that the public conscience should be demoralized by a corporation of informers. True, some of the judges have had a good word for this precious corporation: but judges are not infallible, and sometimes they are ridiculous.\* Above all, it must be remembered that they are, from the necessary cast of their minds and the nature of their pursuits, indifferent critics of questions of general public policy (it would be trite to refer to the frequent failure of lawyers as politicians or mere jurists); and, still more important, their views are, like those of doctors, pathological. They see the *diseased* cases, they are specialists; their minds have a "crick." I lay no stress whatever on the opinions of any of the judges who approve of the policy of encouraging organized gangs of informers, supported by voluntary contributions, to go about the world hunting up cases and setting the law in motion at their pleasure. Personally, I share Sydney Smith's doubts whether the law should not even put down with a strong hand any such Society.

It was several decades ago that Sydney Smith wrote in the *Edinburgh Review* an article attacking, with his usual spirit and candour, the Society for the Suppression of Vice. It was a worse than thankless task to write such an article, for what more easy to represent than that the man who objected to any proceedings of a Society that aimed at suppressing vice was himself a friend to vice and desirous that it should flourish and triumph? And in these days, when some of the judges have, as I have stated, expressed the opinion that the Society is doing a great deal of good (—so, no doubt, is typhoid fever, or why does Providence allow it?—), and when the critic who attacks the Society is neither a clergyman nor an Edinburgh reviewer,—a task of the same kind is still more thankless and even dangerous. Nevertheless, I shall invite the attention of honest and courageous Englishmen—for I hope there are a few of the breed yet left in the island—to a flagrant miscarriage of public justice for which the Society in question is partly answerable, though the gentleman whom they prosecuted was at least as much to blame. The judge, Mr. Sergeant Cox, and the counsel, who in one of the cases was Mr. Douglas Straight, M.P., had no choice, and, indeed, they both did what they could, little as it was, to give a better turn to the story. Let me

\* The late Justice Willes is reported in a civil action to have made the following precious deliverance (it was a question of "necessaries" supplied to a married woman): "A piano is a necessary, because everybody plays the piano. But a guitar is not a necessary, because very few people learn the guitar. Neither is a gold pencil case a necessary; it is only good to lay about and to lose."

first quote a few passages from Sydney Smith's article in the *Edinburgh Review* :—

"Whatever may be said of the single and insulated informer, it is quite a new question when we come to a corporation of informers supported by large contributions. The one may be a good, the other a very serious evil ; the one legal, the other wholly out of the contemplation of law,—which often, and very wisely, allows individuals to do, what it forbids to many individuals assembled.

"If once combination is allowed for the suppression of vice, where are its limits to be? Its capital may as well consist of 100,000*l. per annum*, as of a thousand : its numbers may increase from a thousand subscribers, which this Society, it seems, had reached in its second year, to twenty thousand : and, in that case, what accused person of an inferior condition of life would have the temerity to stand against such a Society? *Their mandates would very soon be law ; and there is no compliance into which they might not frighten the common people, and the lower orders of tradesmen. The idea of a society of gentlemen, calling themselves an Association for the Suppression of Vice, would alarm any small offender, to a degree that would make him prefer any submission to any resistance. He would consider the very fact of being accused by them as almost sufficient to ruin him.*

"An individual accuser accuses at his own expense ; and the risk he runs is a good security that the subject will not be harassed by needless accusations,—a security which, of course, he cannot have against such a society as this, to whom pecuniary loss is an object of such little consequence. It must never be forgotten, that this is not a society for *punishing* people who have been found to transgress the law, but for *accusing* persons of transgressing the law ; and that, before trial, the accused person is to be considered as innocent, and is to have every fair chance of establishing his innocence. He must be no common defendant, however, who does not contend against such a society with very fearful odds ;—the best counsel engaged for his opponents,—great practice in the particular court and particular species of cause,—witnesses thoroughly hackneyed in a court of justice,—and an unlimited command of money. It by no means follows, that the legislature, in allowing individuals to be informers, meant to subject the accused person to the superior weight and power of such societies. The very influence of names must have a considerable weight with the jury. Lord Dartmouth, Lord Radstock, and the Bishop of Durham, *versus* a Whitechapel butcher or publican ! Is this a fair contest before a jury ?"

"A vast distinction is to be made between official duties and voluntary duties. The first are commonly carried on with calmness and moderation ; the latter often characterized, in their execution, by rash and intemperate zeal."

"It is hardly possible that a society for the suppression of vice can

ever be kept within the bounds of good sense and moderation. If there are many members who have really become so from a feeling of duty, there will necessarily be some who enter the society to hide a bad character, and others whose object it is to recommend themselves to their betters by a sedulous and bustling inquisition into the immoralities of the public. The loudest and noisiest suppressors will always carry it against the more prudent part of the community; the most violent will be considered as the most moral; and those who see the absurdity will, from the fear of being thought to encourage vice, be reluctant to oppose it.

"It is of great importance to keep public opinion on the side of virtue. To their authorized and legal correctors, mankind are, on common occasions, ready enough to submit; but there is something in the self-erection of a voluntary magistracy which creates so much disgust, that it almost renders vice popular, and puts the offence at a premium. *We have no doubt but that the immediate effect of a voluntary combination for the suppression of vice, is an involuntary combination in favour of the vices to be suppressed; and this is a very serious drawback from any good of which such societies may be the occasion; for the state of morals, at any one period, depends much more upon opinion than law; and to bring odious and disgusting auxiliaries to the aid of virtue, is to do the utmost possible good to the cause of vice.* We regret that mankind are as they are; and we sincerely wish that the species at large were as completely devoid of every vice and infirmity as the president, vice-president, and committee of the Suppressing Society; but, till they are thus regenerated, it is of the greatest consequence to teach them virtue and religion in a manner which will not make them hate both the one and the other. The greatest delicacy is required in the application of violence to moral and religious sentiment."

"The violent modes of making men good, just alluded to, have been resorted to at periods when the science of legislation was not so well understood as it now is; or when the manners of the age have been peculiarly gloomy or fanatical. The improved knowledge and the improved temper of later times push such laws into the background, and silently repeal them. A *Suppressing Society*, hunting everywhere for penalty and information, has a direct tendency to revive ancient ignorance and fanaticism, and to re-enact laws which, if ever they ought to have existed at all, were certainly calculated for a very different style of manners, and a very different degree of information."

"*Beginning with the best intentions in the world, such societies must in all probability degenerate into a receptacle for every species of tittle-tattle, impertinence, and malice. Men, whose trade is rat-catching, love to catch rats; the bug-destroyer seizes on his bug with delight; and the suppressor is gratified by finding his vice. The last soon becomes a mere tradesman, like the others; none of them moralize, or lament that their*

*respective evils exist in the world. The public feeling is swallowed up in the pursuit of a daily occupation, and in the display of a technical skill.\**

So far Sydney Smith. It is not necessary to quote the polite sentences, with which, in order not to alarm the moralists too much, he concludes the article. He or the editor put them in out of timidity, and they mean nothing. Since his days, everybody is aware that, by an Act of Parliament known as Lord Campbell's Act, the law relating to the sale of books and pictures of a certain kind has been made much more stringent and more easy of application; and also that photography has made it very easy to multiply pictures of the kind referred to. The effect of Lord Campbell's Act has been just this:—It has been made increasingly difficult to carry on the old abominable trade in the old way, and it is now—so the friends of the Society tell us—"mainly carried on through the post-office"—that is to say, so far as its grosser forms are concerned. To any one not blinded by his fanaticism it would seem a strange subject for congratulation that a corrupting trade, formerly carried on within traceable limits and easily driven into corners, was now diffused *untraceably* and widely through the post-office. But fanatics in the application of criminal law, especially fanatics of *this* school, have always been a race by themselves, blind of one eye and half the other. It is quite possible, however, that they may have it in contemplation to introduce some changes in the law which may enable government officials to exercise detective functions at the post-office, and open our correspondence whenever they think proper.

But another effect of attempting to put down by law what law

\* At the time Sydney Smith wrote, the suppression of cruelty to animals was part of the business of this Society. Since then, there has been a divarication of function; and any reader of blue-books may find a forcible illustration of this last remark of Sydney Smith's, in the evidence of the Secretary of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals given before Mr. Auberón Herbert's Committee of last session on the protection of Wild Birds. The terms of the Act in force "*include*" certain birds, and the intention (as well as the language to any honest mind) is perfectly plain. But it was the opinion of this Society that other birds ought to be protected by law; and what did they do? With that "technical skill" which Sydney Smith rightly says comes in such cases to supersede "public feeling" and sense of honesty, they set to work to see if the word "*include*" would not enable them to construe the Act in the sense that though birds A, B, C, and D, were *definitely* covered by its penalties, yet birds E, F, G, and so to Z, were by implication so covered. The Secretary narrated with perfect self-complacency the attempts the Society had made to get the Act thus construed, and the decision of Counsel (I fancy of the law officers of the Crown) against them. Now what would Mr. Whalley have said, if the Roman Catholics had tried thus to work an Act? Nay, what would commercial bodies or ordinary citizens have said, if a civil statute applying to commerce or taxation had been thus tampered with? Yet nobody seems to have thought that this was a highly immoral procedure, or to have reflected that to make out "constructive" offences is the way back to Star Chambers and the like.



cannot put down, has been in this case to diffuse in another shape the mischief complained of. I shall not stain these pages with the unpleasant adjectives which Lord Campbell's Act justly applies to pictures of a certain class,—pictures of elaborated ugliness which make cleanly and elegant minds wonder what anybody can see in them to admire;—but I shall pass on to say that it is obviously difficult to determine the point at which a picture comes within the inerminating definition of the law. This difficulty has been taken advantage of by professional persons of a certain class to produce and imitate pictures of a kind which no honest mind would say came under the Act; which women and children may and do look at without thinking any harm whatever (—we shall see by-and-by what the learned judge remarked—); but which to boys and men of ill-trained, ill-guarded, or over-apprehensive characters (over-apprehensive, I mean, in certain directions) are fraught with suggestions of a dangerous order. It has happened in the natural course of things that not a few of these pictures have had real grace and charm in them; and in some cases the figures of the ladies who, in more or less questionable costumes, have been made the subjects of the photographer's skill, have been of such beauty, that it may well be doubted whether the pictures have done any harm. Men who late in life take up a "suppressing" career of this kind, are usually men of strong and coarse passions, low views of what human nature is, and little poetic sensibility. It is not to them, then, that I speak, when I affirm on grounds of mere moral expediency that it is a fair open question whether some even of the justly incriminated pictures do not serve a useful purpose. *Non meus hic sermo*—I should decline to discuss the subject from the expediency point of view at all—but my observation of life enables me to state what others will be able to confirm and many will suspect as probable in the very nature of things,—namely, that large numbers of youths stop short at the pictures, who would otherwise go much farther afield. I cannot very well write more plainly; it is a difficult thing to write about at all, but the psychology of the case is, so far, not obscure to persons of ordinary character. In my young days, I was much looked up to by youths of my own standing, and had often to act, however unwillingly, as a kind of confessor to some of them. No one who knows human nature will hesitate to believe me when I record that it was by no means among the worst young men that I happened to find questionable works of art. I say *happened*, for, in truth, I knew no bad young men, and only youths who were capable of treating such matters with considerable respect would have ventured to ask my opinion about certain things which they had somehow got hold of. The opinion I very decidedly formed then, and which I still hold to, is that those certain things did in many cases act as stop-gaps in the interest of virtue, or at least correctness of life. I am, of course, not contending

that this is a desirable state of things. But I do contend that from the expediency point of view it is desirable that the incriminating line in these matters should be drawn by capable men; and I add that the very existence of a gap to stop is the result of the false notions and still more false policy of coarse, unpoetical fanatics such as give themselves *con amore* to the work of "suppressing." A youth brought up under my control would have no gap that wanted stopping. Science and high Art together would, under my care, have done so much for him that the "little game" of the mercenary low-art people would be spoiled for them beforehand.—To stop the mouths of impudent wits I may say that I am something more than a theorist in this matter, and know of what I affirm.

However, it is unfortunately true, that whereas some years ago mercenary low art was confined pretty much to certain tracks, in which, when caught, it was soon made to look *indisputably* hateful, it has of late years, under the pressure of the Society and the law, put on more or less decent attire, under cover of which it has immensely diffused itself.

That this diffusion of mercenary low art of a certain kind (a fact of which everybody who has looked at the photograph-shops must be aware) has been a real evil is certain. I believe it to have been a worse evil than the evils expressly aimed at by Lord Campbell's Act. Nor is that all, as we shall see in a moment. But, in the meantime, none of all this proves that the law ought to rush in and interfere; because there is the inevitable subsequent question,—Might we not, in doing a little good, do a much greater harm, and even hinder the *ultimate* attainment of our own objects; namely, the purification and sweetening of human life in its most sacred issues? To this question I should unhesitatingly answer,—Yes, we should. Take another case. If I were asked on my conscience what I believe to have been among the most frightful corruptors of the human mind and heart,—what particular corruptors of society have most frequently made me exclaim in anguish, *Can there be a good God?* I should name certain theological doctrines, and certain ecclesiastical ways of looking at things. I believe in my conscience, and do not doubt that a voice from heaven, could we invoke one, would declare—that certain so-called "religious" ways of looking at social questions have been, and still are, incalculably worse hindrances to human well-being than all the coarse impulses that ever provoked societies to suppress vice. I believe that if persons of the stamp of these suppressors would only help, or, at least, would not hinder, the access of daylight to matters over which they now shut down the hatches, the daylight would prove itself the natural purifier and sweetener, and we should get rid, without unjust compulsion, of all this sewage.

But, believing all this, should I ever dream of asking the law to step in and suppress either the opinions or the social policy which I,

in my soul, believe to be among the worst curses of this poor bewildered world? I have not so learnt my faith in God and man. I would, I hope, stand to be cut in pieces before I would lift a finger or whisper a word with any such drift. In all matters in which the Evil need not hurt us unless we choose, I stand up for one rule,—Let the Good and the Evil fight it out. It is impossible to work any other rule without injustice to some one, and the Ruler of the world can dispense with our bungling. If He has not so arranged matters that this rule will work, then let us all perish. There is no Justice to judge any of us, no Love at the core of things, and the sooner the farce is played out the better.

I was going to say that persons who think thus and thus on these topics, have no reason for looking with indulgence upon these artistic performances of coarse persons, any more than upon the performances of the out-and-out sons of Belial. Far otherwise. *They block the way.* We believe (and, as I said before, I am no mere theorist in these matters, but a responsible flesh-and-blood father) that both Science and Art have things to say or do in certain matters which it is most important to get said and done in the broad, open daylight, by those who love the daylight, not by those who by nature love the darkness because their deeds are evil. And, I repeat it, these mercenary fellows stop the way. They confound all distinctions. It is quite certain their deeds are only fit for the darkness, and yet, in addition to the direct harm they do, they cast an evil shadow on things which desire to stand or fall in the sunshine. But, when once the ugly thing is done in the open, a fresh complication arises, and our honest cause (honest and pure of intent whether right or wrong) receives a fresh indirect injury. For we are, for a moment, perplexed; and we are certainly placed in a most invidious position.

And here I find I shall be compelled to invent a substitute for an ugly and noisome word used by the law.

We are, I say, placed in a most difficult position. If a thing is honestly [brutish] within the meaning of the Act, our policy probably is to object to the Act on principle, but to leave the particular criminal to his fate, without protest, because he richly deserves all he gets and worse. Our course is still clearer in some other cases. We look on with indignant disapproval (at least I do) when a respectable man, like Mr. Pulvermacher, is prosecuted for a harmless paragraph in a pamphlet of testimonials, or when certain things, which are positively useful to society, and others which are harmless, are put down by a straining of the law. *I am perfectly certain that I could, in an hour's conversation, satisfy any uncommitted man of common sense of the injustice and danger to the community involved in several prosecutions of the last few years, got up either by suppressors or medical experts.* There is not a bookseller in London who is safe—not one—if the law is to be carried out all round on the principle of "stretching,"

which ignorant and stupid fanaticism in some cases, and professional spite in others, have flogged into acceptance by magistrates. This may be thought exaggeration, but it is not. Even if it were, however, the bare idea of being at the mercy of fools like most of these suppressors, and knaves trading on virtue like the "professional" informer, is enough to sting and disgust any true Englishman whose skull is more than sixteen inches in circumference.

When we come, then, to the case of pictures which, though *admittedly* not [brutish] within the meaning of the law, are, admittedly, "neither agreeable nor modest," we are justly indignant to find the law strained by an organized body of informers in order to bring these objectionable things within its scope. For, first, law is law, and our very lives may hang upon its inviolability *from all sides*. And, secondly, where is the line to be drawn? For myself, I know perfectly well, that pictures which I should freely inspect in my home with my daughter on one side of me and any other maiden of eighteen on the other, and things which I should consider necessary parts of the education of children, would be condemned to the flames as [brutish] by the majority of the suppressors—even in the present mild stage of that peculiar self-education in fanaticism which all "suppressors" go through. We say, then, what next, and next, and next? The other day I was standing at a photograph-shop, when an elderly gentleman with a very fine face, and a girl whom I took to be his daughter or a country cousin, came up and fixed their attention upon a certain photograph which would clearly come within the line of incrimination which in the case of Mr. Moreton Thompson it has been sought to draw. And what did the old gentleman do? In the most absorbed manner, he went critically, using his finger, over the whole of the outlines of this female figure, the damsel following him, just as she would have followed a lecturer on geology in a class-room. They then went into the shop and bought that wicked photograph—they did—I saw them. Also, I went in and bought it myself. And it is now sticking up in a frame behind my chair, with "Little Bo-Peep" on one side and an illuminated text on the other. The illuminated text is, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and true is thy judgment: thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness"—and the illumination is exquisite; but if we have any repetition of cases such as that of Mr. Moreton Thompson (to which I shall presently refer in detail) I shall, in some sceptical fit, pull down the text as very doubtful indeed, and leave the photograph in its place as the truer thing of the two. In the meanwhile I have to say to my son, "Look here, my boy! when I was your age, an Englishman's house was his castle. Now, a school-board officer can break into it at pleasure, and a duffer of a magistrate, or board of duffers, can decide whether the children of the most cultivated man in England are receiving 'efficient instruction' in terms of Clause 73

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of the Education Act. I recommend you, my son, to quit the nest and live on an island in mid-ocean by yourself if you can find one; or, by the time you are my age, the books you are allowed to have on your shelves, and the pictures on your walls, will be at the mercy of such men as the late Lord Haddo."

Almost every reader will agree with me,—at least after a moment's reflection,—that there is no question of conduct and manners upon which persons are so ready to dogmatise and sit in judgment on each other, as questions of modesty and propriety. But compare the English, the Germans, the French, the Italians, the Americans, the Scandinavians, the Turks. Compare the ancient Greeks, Dante, Goethe, the Brownings. Compare the standard of a policeman, a sculptor, an ordinary private gentleman, and an ordinary small shopkeeper. Consider (if you have the requisite coolness and requisite knowledge,—there is no rudeness in saying that any such appeal must be addressed to a small audience) the amazing phenomena presented in the Bible and classical literature. Allow its due weight to the fact that late scholarship has in some cases gone to upset verdicts which rabid and mistaken "Christian virtue" has for nearly two thousand years been taking for granted as passed once for all on some of the great men and women of antiquity. Consider that as late as Charles Lamb's youth women half-clad were flogged at the cart's tail in London. Consider the astounding changes which women under our own eyes suffer in their ordinary dress without any conscious or visible change in their general tone of moral feeling. Consider that men like Smollett and Steele could and did attack as indecent and demoralising (and I agree with them) a public-school practice which the most virtuous of clerical schoolmasters have always been foremost to defend. Consider that at Rugby the Sixth Form to a boy refused, on grounds of decency, to be present at a scene which Arnold thought it decent to enact.\* Remember, if you know it, the dress, or undress, in which an Italian princess of spotless fame did not hesitate to sit as a model to Canova, within living memory. Consider that out of every dozen great men and women, from the creation till now, eight or ten have incurred the charge of indecency or immorality from some one. Consider, lastly, that I am perforce putting the facts at their very lowest, and that there are few even of studious and thoughtful persons who have the patience or the daring to look such things in the face all round. Consider, I say, these things, and you will, if you are candid, admit, not that there is no practical guidance in these matters, but that they are mainly matters of self-respect, which demand to be decided by men of a very different stamp from that of even the better class of the Suppressors. Questions of delicacy are questions

\* Upon receiving a second summons, they came, like cowards as they were, but obstinately turned their faces to the wall, quite in the spirit of modern compromise.

upon which nearly all are ready to quarrel and dogmatise, but which require, for even approximate decision, much candour, varied knowledge, many-sided sensibility, and considerable vigour of brain.—Unhappily, there is this to be said also :—They are matters in which it is exceedingly easy to win at a dash and cheaply a fine reputation for high morality and beautiful zeal. Even writers of real faculty are not always able to resist the desire to rush in and try to make reputation on this footing. Unluckily for writers who make this attempt, the better sort of critical readers are extremely quick to see through half-hearted virtue of that order, and not easy to be conciliated by any after-pretences of literary liberality which may accompany such performances by way of tags.

Before I quote the newspaper report of the law-case which has provoked these comments, let me be permitted to give an extract or two from writers who cannot be accused of any of the levity which by dull persons might be laid at the door of Sydney Smith (Sydney Smith was, in truth, as his “Lectures on Moral Philosophy,” among other things, prove, a clear-headed and sound-hearted moralist of a very high order)—and first,

MR. RUSKIN, in “Time and Tide by Wear and Tyne,” page 84 :—  
“It is always necessary, in enacting strict law, to leave some safety-valve\* for outlet of irrepressible vice. Nearly all the stern law-givers of old time erred by oversight in this ; so that the morbid elements of the State, which it should be allowed to get rid of in a cutaneous and openly curable manner, were thrown inwards, and corrupted its constitution, and broke all down.” This may naturally lead up to a passage from another writer, who is also above suspicion as a moralist—

\* There is another and more profoundly moral and humane reason for leaving a margin. So complicated is human life, and so short-sighted is the best legislation, that numerous cases must occur in which the application of a law *without* a margin would be cruel and unjust. Cases frequently happen in which excellent citizens and real friends of virtue do things—casually or continuously, by a mere lapse or by honest intent—things which it is not desirable that the law should sweep into its net of incrimination, but which, nevertheless, a law *without* a margin would have to deal with by public penalties of some kind. And besides this, there are cases of misfortune, including some blame, in which such publicity as necessarily attends the operation of the law in certain matters has a cruel effect, exceedingly unfavourable to virtue in the long run. What man of forty cannot recall a dozen or a score of cases where women were concerned, in which publicity would have broken up households, overthrown half-a-dozen lives, driven some women into the last depths of social degradation, and others into suicide, or lunatic asylums? Believing, as I do, that Mr. Lowe at the Home Office is the right man in the right place, I was glad to see him showing a firm front to the foolish fanatics who wanted the other day to extend Mr. Charley's Act to cases in which a professional nurse took in only one child. And I hope Mr. Lowe will find time to look carefully at the new Registration measure which Earl Morley so complacently says will lessen infanticide, but which the majority of the persons that I have talked to about it think will have the contrary effect—and worse than that.

THE REV. H. WARD BEECHER, ("Norwood," vol. i, page 7):—"Perhaps nowhere in the world can be found more unlovely wickedness or malignant, bitter, tenacious hatred of good—than in New England. The good are very good, and the bad are very bad. The high moral tone of public sentiment, in many New England towns, and its penetrating and almost inquisitorial character, either powerfully determines men to good, or chafes and embitters them. This is especially true when, in certain cases, good men are so thoroughly intent upon public morality that the private individual has scarcely any choice left. Under such a pressure some men act in open wickedness out of spite, and some secretly; and the bottom of society wages clandestine war with the top."

And this may not less naturally introduce my last quotation, which will be from "Transatlantic Sketches," by GREVILLE JOHN CHESTER B.A. (whom I take to be an English clergyman), Smith, Elder, & Co., 1869:—"Life and property are tolerably secure in New England; and if, as Western men allege, the New Englanders are somewhat slow, they are at least free from crimes of open violence. To more secret but no less detestable crimes the New Englanders are unhappily prone; and the researches of Dr. Jesse Chickering, and others, prove that the descendants of the old Puritan families are absolutely dying out of the land from the terrible frequency of the crimes of \* \* \* and infanticide. (See Dr. Jesse Chickering's Report of the City Population of Boston, November, 1851, Boston; Census of State of New York, 1865, by Dr. Franklin Hough; Registration Reports of Massachusetts; and a powerful article on the subject in 'Harper's Magazine,' February 1859.) New England and New York ladies think it 'fashionable' to have no children. 'Children,' says a writer in 'Harper's Magazine,' 'have come to be considered a care, a burden, and an expense, which it is thought must, at least to some extent, be dispensed with.' Dr. Chickering, after a careful analysis of the births and deaths in Boston in 1849 and 1850, states it to be a fact, that 'the whole increase of population arising from the excess of births over the deaths for those two years has been among the foreign population. . . . If, too, what I heard from inhabitants be true, even blacker crimes than these are rife in the New England community.'"

Now, I have no sympathy with Mr. Chester's special political and ecclesiastical leanings, and I have lived long enough to allow its full force to the old rule,—“Believe nothing that you are told and only half what you hear.” But behind all this smoke there must be some fire, and Mr. Ruskin, Mr. Beecher, and Mr. Chester make up a three-fold cord, not easily to be broken, of moral anticipation, general statement, and detailed statement, all three pointing in one direction. What I personally, as an habitually minute and attentive observer, know of the disastrous effects of certain recent proceedings over here



in the way of "suppression,"—the diffusion in new shapes of the evil sought to be suppressed, and the cynical exasperation of those whom it was most desirable to make friends of,—I must, for obvious reasons, suppress. Suffice it to say, that it is by no means impossible that, in virtue of a pair of eyes, a memory, and a gift of putting facts together, I know more about these matters than the whole society of suppressors, and that I believe, as "a dying man speaking to dying men," they have done serious and for the present irremediable harm.

We will now pass on to the case of Mr. Moreton Thompson at the Middlesex Sessions, a few days ago.

"Mr. William Moreton Thompson, of Cockspur Street, was indicted, at the instance of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, for selling certain [brutish] photographs, and also with having a number of other photographs of a similar kind in his possession for the purpose of sale. Mr. Besley, instructed by Messrs. Collette and Collette, prosecuted; Mr. Mead appeared for the defendant, who pleaded guilty. Mr. Besley said in this case, after having stated the facts, he should ask that Mr. Thompson should be allowed to enter into his own recognisances to come up for judgment if called upon.

"He believed that Mr. Thompson was desirous of conducting his business in a proper manner; but a person who had charge of it had sold things which, although *perhaps not coming within the ordinary meaning of what was termed [brutish] were still neither modest nor agreeable*; and therefore were held to come within the meaning of what was [brutish], and, from the very character of them, tended to sap the foundations of morality. This was the first of a series of cases of this class, which was prosecuted by the Society for the Suppression of Vice, assisted by the police of the different divisions; and he (Mr. Besley) was authorised to say that Mr. Thompson had no wish whatever to countenance this traffic."

This is, in brief, the first stage of the business. Notice the phraseology. The pictures, though not within the meaning of the law, are, you will observe, to be "*held*" to be so, if the Society can induce a thick-headed jury to take that view. "Though the acts with which the defendant in this case is charged, do not perhaps come within the ordinary meaning of the words, forgery, theft, still, since they were not perfectly honourable as many gentlemen understand such things, we hope they may be held to be theft and forgery, and that the defendant, if convicted, may be held liable to penal servitude accordingly." How would that speech sound? Yet it is a mere tracing from the copy before us.

Now for the next step:—

"Mr. Mead, on the part of the defendant, said it was necessary for him to say but little, for when the case was at the police-court a

witness was called, and from his evidence it appeared that some time ago photographs of an improper character were seen by Mr. Thompson in his shop, and he instructed his assistant that he should on no account deal in such photographs for the future, but that order was disobeyed, and all such photographs were afterwards carefully concealed from his eye. The sale of them was continued by the assistant without his knowledge. *He (Mr. Mead) thought that Mr. Thompson had a good defence to this prosecution, as these photographs were not sufficiently [brutish] to come within the meaning of the Act, but defendant felt it would not be right on his part to take that course, and had therefore pleaded guilty to the indictment.* He was a man who had carried on a respectable business for twenty years, and there was not the slightest blemish upon his character."

Upon this I will only remark here that, judging from the photographs which I, like others, have seen in Mr. Thompson's shop, they were, beyond question, *not* within the meaning of the Act as it stands, though they were neither "agreeable nor modest," as the counsel for the prosecution stated. But the want of "modesty" was, in many cases, in the women's countenances only. Nobody that I am aware of (except a professional suppressor) would describe the bust known as the Clytie as immodest. Give the Clytie an impudent face, and the thing instantly becomes offensive. But, if that is to decide it, we have come at once to the *lex non scripta* of our much-quoted friend, the beadle, who took a man up for "looking lewd." Lord Campbell, indeed, was quite capable of introducing an Act to send a man to prison for "looking lewd;" but take it as you will, the Act is not *yet* in force, or even before Parliament. Let us pass on:—

"The judge said it appeared to him that, *with one exception, there was not a photograph amongst them that could not be found in every shop and on every drawing-room table in the kingdom.* Addressing Mr. Thompson, his lordship said:—"I shall now call upon you to enter into your own recognisances to come up for judgment if called upon. I am fully satisfied with your explanation; and there is no stain upon your moral character."

I shall at least have credit for candour here if I say that Serjeant Cox, supposing he said those very words, went a little too far. For "could not," say "*might not*," and for "every drawing-room table," substitute "*almost every drawing-room table*," and you have the truth. No person of high taste would put some of these pictures on his table. But high taste is rare, and you might very well meet them in your next visit. Anyone, you or I, for example, might keep them in a corner as illustrations of "manners," and to call them [brutish] was a most impudent and unfair attempt to strain the law. But now let us hear Mr. Thompson:—

"Mr. Thompson said—I am quite satisfied with this expression of

your lordship's opinion ; and, contrary to the advice of my legal advisers, I pleaded guilty, because I objected to countenance what I could not entirely approve of, and I thank your lordship for this expression of your opinion. The required recognisances were then entered into, and the matter terminated."

A day or two afterwards, a Mr. King, of Chancery Lane (his case coming perhaps a shade nearer the just line of incrimination), was brought up, at the instance of the same gang of informers, and he also pleaded guilty, and was discharged on his own recognisances. In this case the judge again said there was nothing against the moral character of the defendant. But he went further. Evidently startled at this un-English spectacle of intimidation and moral cowardice, he said he *regretted that the case had not come before him in such a form that the [brutishness] or otherwise of the pictures could have been tried in a legal way.* These are strong words from a judge in such a case, and they must be taken to mean at least a portion of what I am now going to say, concerning what thus far happened.

What in the name of English fair play *ought* to have happened ? I will tell you. The defendants ought, like honest men, to have pleaded Not Guilty (expressing any *regret* they pleased, and promising to withdraw some of the photographs as likely to do harm). An honest jury ought to have acquitted them both. And then—if it were legally possible, as I think it is,—they ought to have indicted the Society for conspiracy.

Just observe what Mr. Moreton Thompson took upon himself to do. It is impossible to say whether his logic or his moral courage failed him, but what he did was this : he took upon himself, by pleading guilty, the whole functions of judge and jury,—the interpretation of the law and the question of fact,—in a case in which his counsel advised him and the prosecuting counsel practically admitted, he had a legal defence to the indictment. Now, I say there is not an Englishman living who has not a right to stand up and complain that Mr. Thompson has by this act of his betrayed the interests of every man, woman, and child in the fair administration of the law, and opened the door for every kind and degree of intimidation at the hands of informers. It was quite open to Mr. Thompson to say this :—"These pictures were sold against my express orders, and without my knowledge. I think them calculated to do harm, and shall gladly see them destroyed, at whatever cost. I will join in any effort that may be made by good men, in combination or singly, to check these evils, so long as no public wrong is done. But I now stand here, an English citizen, to be judged by English law ; I hold in trust the interests of all my countrymen and countrywomen in the strict purity of the administration of justice. I am advised, and believe that the indictment got up by this powerful Society has not the law behind it ; and I plead Not Guilty." If he had done this, it

is morally certain (if the learned judge's remarks are at all accurately reported, as they plainly are) he would have been acquitted. And then, instead of writing this article, I might have been writing to propose a testimonial to Mr. Thompson in acknowledgment of his public spirit and good feeling, and also to propose the establishment among gentlemen of his profession of a Committee of Good Taste to keep the general body in order. As things stand at present, the photographs are gone—which is well, at least as to most of them. But a premium has been offered, in the name of the law, to any organisation of informers that likes a chance-triumph for a moral “fad” better than the general triumph of honesty and justice for us all. A stroke of business which was not particularly called for in these dark and dastardly days.

AN IRRECONCILABLE.

ANDRÉ LE CHAPELAIN.

(CLERK OF LOVE, 1170.)

A BALLAD TO VENUS OF THE COMING YEARS.

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I.

QUEEN VENUS, round whose feet,  
To tend thy sacred fire,  
With service bitter-sweet  
Nor youths nor maidens tire ;—  
Goddess, whose bounties be  
Large as the un-oared sea ;—

II.

Mother, whose eldest born  
First stirred his stammering tongue,  
In the world's youngest morn,  
When the first daisies sprung ;—  
Whose last, when Time shall die,  
In the same grave shall lie :—

III.

Hear thou one suppliant more !  
Must I, thy bard, grow old,  
Bent, with the temples frore,  
Not jocund be, nor bold,  
To tune, for folk in May,  
Ballad and virelai ?

IV.

Shall the youths jeer and jape,  
“ Behold his verse doth dote,—  
Leave thou Love's lute to scrape,  
And tune thy wrinkled throat  
To rounds of ‘Flesh is Grass,’ ”—  
Shall they cry thus and pass,

## V.

And the sweet girls go by?  
 "Beshrew the greybeard's tune!—  
 What ails his minstrelsy  
 To sing us snow in June!"  
 Shall they too laugh, and fleet  
 Far in the sun-warmed street?

## VI.

But thou, whose beauty bright,  
 Upon thy wooded hill,  
 With ineffectual light  
 The wan sun seeketh still;—  
 Woman, whose tears are dried,  
 Hardly, for Adon's side,

## VII.

Have pity, Erycine!  
 Withhold not all thy sweets;  
 Must I thy gifts resign  
 For Love's mere broken meats,  
 And suit for alms prefer  
 That was thine Almoner?

## VIII.

Must I, as bondsman, kneel  
 That, in full many a cause,  
 Have scrolled thy just appeal—  
 Have I not writ thy Laws?—  
*That none from Love shall take*  
*Save but for Love's sweet sake;—*

## IX.

*That none shall aught refuse*  
*To Love of Love's fair dues;—*  
*That none bright Love shall scoff*  
*Or deem foul shame thereof;—*  
*That none shall traitor be*  
*To Love's dear secrecy;—*

## X.

Avert, avert it, Queen!  
 Debarred thy listed sports,  
 Let me at least be seen  
 An usher in thy courts,  
 Outworn, but still indued  
 With badge of servitude.

## XI.

When I no more may go,  
 As one that walks on air,  
 To string notes soft and slow  
 By maids found sweet and fair ;—  
 When I no more may be  
 Of Love's blithe company ;—

## XII.

When I no more may sit  
 Within thine own pleasance,  
 To weave, in sentence fit,  
 Thy golden dalliance ;  
 And other hands than these  
 Shall write thy soft decrees ;—

## XIII.

Leave me at least to sing  
 About thine outer walls,  
 To tell thy pleasuring,  
 Thy mirth, thy festivals ;  
 Yea, let my swan-song be  
 Thy grace, thy sanctity.

---

*(Here ended André's words :*

*But One, that writeth, saith—  
 Betwixt his stricken chords*

*He heard the wheels of Death ;  
 And knew the fruits Love bare  
 But Dead-Sea apples were.)*



## MODERN VERS DE SOCIÉTÉ.

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THE art of writing verses of artificial life, commonly called *vers de société*, though constantly cultivated, has fewer masterpieces than perhaps any other. For every one good example of this class of composition in our language there are at least fifty good poems. In the present day of countless magazines there is a great demand for this species of verse, but the number of those who have really achieved success in it might be counted on the fingers, while the really first-rate pieces which have been produced are scarcely too many for a man with a good memory to learn by heart.

There are many reasons for this. In the first place, they are so easy to write badly and so difficult to write well, and it is so much pleasanter to throw off the new than to polish the old, that few of these trifles ever receive that finish from the hands of their designers which can alone raise them above mediocrity. To create is a matter of hours: to polish, of days; and few minds which are playful enough to write light verses have the patience necessary for thorough execution. Indeed, the labour required to carry these verses safely over the bridge which divides ability from achievement seems quite misproportioned to the lightness of the load and the seriousness of the result. It may almost be truly said that this labour increases in inverse proportion to the weight of the burden. To change our metaphor, these verses must be as finely wrought as filigree, and as polished as a cameo, before they can claim recognition as works of art. No miniature painter touches and retouches, paints and repaints, polishes and repolishes, with more fastidiousness than the true artist in *vers de société*. It is an art in which sketches are worthless, studies unsightly, and only finished specimens capable of giving satisfaction.

But, besides the labour which is thus absolutely essential for the continued production of good work of this kind (for this art, like all others, has its occasional exceptions, especially in practised hands, and many perfect verses have been written with ease and without need of after-polish), it is rare to find combined in one person the many different qualities necessary to produce any variety of these delicate works. To do this, a man cannot have too wide sympathy, or too varied knowledge or accomplishments; but at least, if he wish to attain the first rank, he should have all or most of the following qualities, viz.: fancy, wit, humour, irony, satire, sentiment, and sensibility. Nor is it enough to possess varied powers, but he must have them all

under control, so that none may predominate too much ; and he must, to cap them all, have a critical taste, so as to ensure the agreeableness of his compositions, which in this must be like a salad, composed of all things and strongly savouring of none. For the end of the art is to amuse by elegance, to which harmony and proportion are essential.

There is still one more thing wanting to complete these works of art, and that is, manipulative skill. To borrow another simile from the art of cookery, a *pâté* may be filled with the choicest delicacies admirably mixed ; but, if the crust be heavy, the dish is spoiled ; in a word, without lightness of hand *vers de société* are worthless, despite all the care and science in their composition. Though we lament the necessity of using a French title, we cannot complain of its inappropriateness, for not only is the subject of these verses, Society, *i.e.*, the artificial life of man as opposed to his natural life,—but it is only the influences of society upon a man that can educate him to produce them. Not alone with his heart and his God, but abroad in the world with his fellow-men, are these verses composed. If he write to his mistress it is not as the soul speaking to the soul, but the gentleman to the lady ; if he speak of himself it is not of the sorrow that has maimed his life, or the sin which saddens its solitary moments, but of disappointments he can jest with, or foibles which he does not mind twitting himself with publicly ; or, if he touch more serious subjects, it is only for a moment as a foil to brighter themes. In fact he sings as he would not mind talking in a mixed company, just showing sufficient feeling to escape the charge of heartlessness, and not enough to give a serious tone to the conversation, and whether smiling or sighing ever preserving a harmonious decorum between laughter on the one side and tears on the other, between deep feeling and impassiveness, never dull or heavy, never reckless or absurd, never quite in earnest but never without object in his freest banter.

It is not, however, only in the subject of the verse that this nice balance requires to be kept ; moderation in all things is necessary in this class of composition. The neatness of the thought, the aptness of the subject, the power of expression, the brightness of the wit, the sprightliness of the fancy, are all secondary considerations to the manner in which they are used. This fact should encourage those to whom the array of qualities which we have asserted as necessary to make a first-rate writer of these verses may appear formidable. It is not necessary that any of these qualities should be possessed in a remarkable degree ; it is only necessary that they should be thoroughly under control. So that a man with but slender wit, mediocre fancy, and slight satirical power may write very good *vers de société*, if he only have the skill to use them in proper proportion and in subordination to elegance. Indeed, it is almost an advantage that he should not have any gift very strongly

developed, as it is then apt to escape control and upset the balance.

He cannot, however, have too much culture, or be too well bred. A poet is said to be born not made; but a writer of *vers de société* must be both, and may be more properly said to be bred than either. Mr. Frederick Locker, himself a master of this kind of verse, writes in his charming preface to his charming "*Lyra Elegantiarum*," "The writer of *vers de société*, in order to be genuinely successful, must not only be more or less of a poet, but he must also be a man of the world, in the most liberal sense of the expression; he must have mixed throughout his life with the most refined and cultivated members of his species, not merely as a bystander but as an actor in the busy throng."

To this lovely nosegay of the garden-flowers of our literature, we must refer our readers for examples of writers no longer living. This book is as valuable from a historical as it is from an artistic point of view, and shows that if you could write a history of a country from its ballads you could write one of its society from its elegant verses. As you turn over the leaves of "*Lyra Elegantiarum*" you seem to see pass before you a panorama of different phases of English life, from the time of Queen Elizabeth to Queen Victoria. Society changes and its verses with them. We no longer pen sonnets to our mistress's eyebrow or woo Amaryllis in the guise of a shepherd; the golden numbers of Herrick we could scarce imitate if we would; we dare not be so nasty as Swift, or so naughty as Congreve. The days of sham Arcadianism are over, and we have little sympathy with the sentimentality of fifty years ago. The practical and decorous spirit of the present age is apparent even in our lightest verses. Let us consider a few of the more recent.

Of these, however, we must limit our notice to such as will best illustrate our theory of the art, and show its latest development. Our readers will find our deficiencies in this and other respects amply supplied in an article by Mr. Tom Hood in *London Society* for May, 1870, the writer of which is not only the author of many pleasant verses, and a careful critic, but has published a little work on the "*Rules of Rhyme*," which teaches the art of versification in a clear and sound manner.

Some mention of Præd, the father of modern English verse, is, however, necessary. He stands first not only in priority and quality, but in quantity also. In such pieces as "*The Belle of the Ballroom*" and "*The Vicar*" he first showed how varied were the sympathies, the learning, and the taste, which could be displayed with advantage in *vers de société*. He extended their domain from high-flown compliment, fanciful conceits, flirtations, and bacchanalism, to every other subject that interests men, and forms the matter of conversation. Politics, philosophy, literature, art, domestic life, and even religion,

are drawn into his wide net. He is like his own Belle ; who talked—

“ — of politics and prayers ;  
Of Southey's prose and Wordsworth's sonnets,—  
Of dangles—or of dancing bears,  
Of battles—or the last new bonnets.”

The domain so extended has never contracted and never can contract again.

Though not equal to *Praed* in originality or natural facility, Mr. Locker has attained to the first rank of writers of *vers de société* by acquiring a perfect knowledge of his own powers and almost perfect skill in using them. Although his verses are thoroughly representative of his day, and marked with distinct individuality, there is scarcely a versifier from Shakespeare to Thackeray from whom he has not learnt something of his art. He therefore writes with perfect “knowledge,” as that word is used in connection with musical compositions, and he has attempted almost every variety of verse of this kind with a high degree of success. “The Pilgrims of Pall Mall” is not unworthy to be placed beside Lamb's “Hester ;” of the tender pathos of “A Wish” Cowper need not have been ashamed ; the jesting philosophy of “A Human Skull” might have occurred to *Praed* ; while of verses that end with an anti-climax, “Geraldine and I” is a masterpiece, though it is doubtful, whether a person with such trained power of description as “I” could have proved a bore to a lady so witty as Geraldine. But though essentially a writer of verse as distinct from poetry, he is not wanting in music of a higher strain, such as pleased the ears of ladies in the time of Elizabeth ; as the exquisite Serenade recently published in *Good Words* sufficiently exemplifies. We prefer, however, to quote here, as being more representative of his individuality, and of the special qualities of the kind of verse which we are discussing, the following piece :—

#### THE ANGORA CAT.

Good pastry is vended  
In Cité Fadette ;  
Ma'lame Pons can make splendid  
Brioche and galette !

Monsieur Pons is so fat that  
He's laid on the shelf ;  
Madame Pons had a cat that  
Was fat as herself.

Long hair, soft as satin,  
A musical purr—  
'Gainst the window she'd flatten  
Her delicate fur.

Once I drove Lou to see what  
 Our neighbours were at,  
 When, in rapture, cried she, "What  
 An exquisite cat !

"What whiskers ! She's purring  
 All over. Regale  
 Our eyes, Puss, by stirring  
 Your feathery tail !

"Monsieur Pons, will you sell her ?"  
 "*Ma femme est sortie,*  
 Your offer I'll tell her,  
 But—will she ?" says he.

Yet Pons was persuaded  
 To part with the prize :  
 (Our bargain was aided,  
 My Lou, by your eyes !)

From his *legitime* save him,  
 My fate I prefer !  
 For I warrant she gave him  
*Un mauvais quart d'heure.*

I'm giving a pleasant  
 Grimalkin to Lou,—  
 Ah, Puss, what a present  
 I'm giving to you !

What a trifle it is. The poet buys for a young lady a cat from a French baker who is afraid of his wife. That is all. Yet how it pleases ! How delicately the scene and bargain are suggested rather than described ; with how pretty a compliment it ends. Had the description been minuter or the dialogue more full, had even the compliment been more elaborate, the work had been spoilt. As it is, it is perfect, as light and sweet as one of Mons. Pons' *brioques*.

Of the workmanship of Mr. Mortimer Collins, to whom Nature has been more prodigal of gift, we cannot speak in the same terms of satisfaction. To Mr. Locker we can point as an example in this respect, but to Mr. Collins mainly as a warning. No poet has written more splendid stanzas than Mr. Collins, and none fewer good poems. With unbounded command of language and power of versification, he can write numberless lines which, for sweetness and strength, are unsurpassable. The willing ear listens, charmed as with the voice of a siren (a male siren, be it said, with a rich baritone), and the charm lasts so long as we do not pay too much heed to the words ; but when we pass from the sound to the sense, disappointment awaits us ere long. After a succession of faultless stanzas, some "foreign matter," some phrase out of keeping, or expression of questionable taste maybe, interrupts the harmony and breaks the spell. For

instance, in the "Inn of Strange Meetings," a description of a bridegroom watching his sleeping bride, conceived in a pure and elevated spirit, is spoilt by apostrophising her as his "lady of the loosened zone," and by the entirely unnecessary information that the coverlet of the pair is made of "miniver." Again the romantic spirit of "Rupert's Ring" is ruined by the commonplace expression "darling thing," applied in the concluding stanza to the lady whose love at last rewards a life of loveless toil.

This want of keeping makes it difficult to assign a place to many of his compositions, in which the poet seems uncertain of his aim and attitude, whether he is on Parnassus or Primrose Hill, drinking Hippocrène or claret, or whether the pipe at his lips was made by Pan in Attica or Milo in the Strand. There can, however, be no doubt that the two little Horatian pieces, "Ad Chloen, M.A." and its companion, are properly described as *vers de société*.

#### AD CHLOEN, M.A.

(Fresh from her Cambridge Examination.)

Lady, very fair are you,  
And your eyes are very blue,  
    And your hose;  
And your brow is like the snow;  
And the various things you know  
    Goodness knows.

And the rose flush on your cheek,  
And your algebra and Greek  
    Perfect are;  
And that loving lustrous eye  
Recognises in the sky  
    Every star.

You have pouting piquant lips,  
You can doubtless an eclipse  
    Calculate;  
But for your cœrulean hue,  
I had certainly from you  
    Met my fate.

If by an arrangement dual  
I were Adams mixed with Whewell,  
    Then some day  
I, as wooer, perhaps might come,  
To so sweet an Artium  
    . Magistra.

But for the last word this little piece would have been perfect, and we cannot understand how Mr. Collins, with his ear for rhythm and power of versification, could have allowed it to pass from his hand with such a serious defect. Surely to accentuate the first and third syllable of "Magistra," is as complicated a mistake in quantity as it is possible to make, while, on the other hand, if the word is pronounced properly, the rhythm and rhyme are both spoiled. The companion to this piece, which is equally admirable in conception, is also spoiled by similar carelessness in execution, and also by a very old joke quite unworthy of Chloë, M.A. We are sorry that we have not time to dwell more on the merits of this exceedingly clever writer, who, by such poems as the "Ivory Gate," "A Greek Idyll," "A Summer Song," and others, has shown that he has power to produce work without flaw.

Having contrasted two writers to show the rigid requirements of this art in point of execution and tone, we now wish to contrast

others to show its primary aim. The intention of *vers de société* is, as we conceive it, to please by means of elegance; and, however elegant they may be, they are not properly so called if the primary intention is to please by other means.

No future collector of non-serious verse will be able to pass over the works of Mr. C. S. Calverley or Mr. W. S. Gilbert. The first is a master of parody, the latter of grotesque. The humour of Mr. Calverley is indeed of the driest possible kind. It is as impossible to laugh at it as it is impossible not to smile. The most severe correctness both in structure and rhythm is everywhere maintained. They are polished as scarcely any English verses are polished, and as elegant in treatment as they can well be. In a word, they in every way conform to the strictest rules of our art in point of composition, but, nevertheless, their primary aim is to amuse by the elaboration of a peculiar species of humour, viz., burlesque, and they are, therefore, outside our present province. We cannot, however, forbear quoting one of these exquisite trifles, or help regretting that it must be one of the shortest.

## PEACE.

## A STUDY.

He stood, a worn-out City clerk—  
 Who'd toiled, and seen no holiday,  
 For forty years from dawn to dark—  
 Alone beside Caermarthen Bay.

He felt the salt spray on his lips;  
 Heard children's voices on the sands;  
 Up the sun's path he saw the ships  
 Sail on and on to other lands;

And laughed aloud. Each sight and sound  
 To him was joy too deep for tears;  
 He sat him on the beach, and bound  
 A blue bandana round his ears;

And thought how, posted near his door,  
 His own green door on Camden Hill,  
 Two bands at least, most likely more,  
 Were mingling at their own sweet will

Verdi with Vance. And at the thought  
 He laughed again, and softly drew  
 That "Morning Herald" that he'd bought  
 Forth from his breast, and read it through.

For a similar reason the author of the "Bab Ballads" must only here be mentioned as a master of versification, who, while possessing all the technical skill required for our art, has written few if any pieces strictly within its limits.

On the other hand, elegance is the genius who presides over the work of Mr. Austin Dobson, the last candidate for notice both as a poet and a writer of *vers de société*. In writing of his verses we feel



the same delicacy as though they were our own, for not only have many of the pieces now collected in "Vignettes in Rhyme" appeared in these pages, but the writer of this article is his intimate friend, and has been privileged to watch the development of his poetical power from its dawn to the present day. With this avowal we do not mind expressing our opinion in this place, as here, if anywhere, what we write will be read by those who have already become acquainted with his style and capacity, and will be therefore competent to judge from their own experience how much our opinion is biassed by familiarity and friendship. We think then that no one has excelled him in the technical skill of his art, and that he has treated subjects of modern life with a spirit and grace that is peculiarly his own. The comparison drawn by Mr. Locker between *vers de société* and old china is especially applicable to his verses, which have all the qualities of the best Dresden and Chelsea, without their affectation and insincerity. He has especially sympathy with all that is beautiful in the Arcadian French School of Watteau and Boucher, but applies all its grace of decoration to genuine sentiment and healthy morality. He is to the poetry of the present day what Mr. G. D. Leslie is to pictorial art, but he is something more. When we have eliminated from his little volume such poems as the "Dead Letter," the "Gentleman," and "Gentlewoman of the Old School," "Une Marquise," &c., which belong to this pictorial school, the four beautiful songs of Angiola, in which he has caught the spirit of the early Italian poets, and his imitations of Horace, there remain many which show that his sympathy is not limited to the grace and fancy of former epochs, but that he has delicate springs of wit and humour, a thorough appreciation of the spirit of modern culture and society, and a pictorial power of his own. Of this power a good example is given in the following lines, in which, with a few delicate touches, the dreariness of a London doctor's room and garden is admirably depicted.

"Well, I must wait!" The Doctor's room,  
Where I used this expression,  
Wore the severe official gloom  
Attached to that profession;  
Rendered severer by a bald  
And skinless Gladiator,  
Whose raw robustness first appalled  
The entering spectator.

No one would call "The Lancet" gay,—  
Few could avoid confessing  
That Jones "On Muscular Decay"  
Is, as a rule, depressing:  
So leaving both, to change the scene,  
I turned toward the shutter,  
And peered out vacantly between  
A water-butt and gutter. 4

Below, the Doctor's garden lay,  
 If thus imagination  
 May dignify a square of clay  
 Unused to vegetation,  
 Filled with a dismal-looking swing—  
 That brought to mind a gallows—  
 An empty kennel, mouldering,  
 And two dyspeptic aloes.

No sparrow chirped, no daisy sprung,  
 About the place deserted ;  
 Only across the swing-board hung  
 A battered doll, inverted,  
 Which sadly seemed to disconcert  
 The vagrant cat that scanned it,  
 Sniffed doubtfully around the skirt,  
 But failed to understand it.

Of the rare quality of irony, "The Love Letter," and "A Virtuoso," are good examples, and it would be difficult to exceed the refined repartee of such pieces as the "Dialogue from Plato," and "Tu Quoque."

As the latter poem has been much improved since it appeared in these pages, we will reprint it here, as an example of his most finished work, and his unwearying patience in finishing.

## TU QUOQUE.

AN IDYLL IN THE CONSERVATORY.

—"romprons-nous,  
*Ou ne romprons-nous pas ?*"—LE DÉPIT AMOUREUX.

NELLIE.

If I were you, when ladies at the play, sir,  
 Beckon and nod, a melodrama through,  
 I would not turn abstractedly away, sir,  
 If I were you !

FRANK.

If I were you, when persons I affected,  
 Wait for three hours to take me down to Kew,  
 I would, at least, pretend I recollected,  
 If I were you !

NELLIE.

If I were you, when ladies are so lavish,  
 Sir, as to keep me every waltz but two,  
 I would not dance with *odious* Miss M'Tavish,  
 If I were you !

FRANK.

If I were you, who vow you cannot suffer  
 Whiff of the best,—the mildest "honey-dew,"  
 I would not dance with smoke-consuming Puffer,  
 If I were you !

NELLIE.

If I were you, I would not, sir, be bitter,  
Even to write the "Cynical Review;"—

FRANK.

No, I should doubtless find flirtation fitter,  
If I were you!

NELLIE.

Really! You would? Why Frank, you're quite delightful,—  
Hot as Othello, and as black of hue;  
Borrow my fan. I would not look so *frightful*  
If I were you!

FRANK.

"It is the cause!" I mean your chaperon is  
Bringing some well-curled juvenile. Adieu!  
I shall retire. I'd spare that poor Adonis,  
If I were you!

NELLIE.

Go, if you will. At once! And by express, sir!  
Where shall it be? To China—or Peru?  
Go, I should leave inquirers my address, sir,  
If I were you!

FRANK.

No,—I remain. To stay and fight a duel  
Seems, on the whole, the proper thing to do—  
Ah, you are strong,—I would not then be cruel,  
If I were you!

NELLIE.

One does not like one's feelings to be doubted,—

FRANK.

One does not like one's friends to misconstrue,—

NELLIE.

If I confess that I a wee bit pouted?—

FRANK.

I should admit that I was *piqué*, too.

NELLIE.

Ask me to dance. I'd say no more about it,  
If I were you!

[Waltz.—*Exeunt.*]

At present Mr. Dobson's work bears more trace of the artist than the man, of education than nature, of sensibility than feeling, but it possesses in a remarkable degree the special qualities which are required in *vers de société* and poems of fancy, such as he has hitherto

attempted, while the genuine pathos of "Before Sedan," which touches a far higher chord, and the force shown in occasional verses and stanzas, wherever force is required incidentally for the sake of art, prove the possession of varied powers, which are as yet undeveloped or which he has not as yet chosen to display.

In concluding our article we would say a few words as to the uses of *vers de société*. We think we hear our practical friends exclaiming, after out of mere friendship they have waded through this essay: "What waste of time and talent! what trifling! Why your verses are neither prose nor poetry, and are fit only to light fires." It were useless to answer such; the man who cries *cui bono* to this or any other kind of art has no need for it; it is as useless to him as a telescope to a blind man. But there are many who take pleasure in them, and even write them, who doubt whether the delight which is given by them is worthy of so much pains. To these we would say that all relaxation has its use, whether physical or intellectual, and no greater relaxation can be given to the intellect of a cultivated man than reading and writing *vers de société*. It is for these and by these that they are written; as the athlete indulges in graceful exercise for the relaxation of his body, so the best relaxation for an industrious mind is a milder and more pleasurable use of the intellect. If at the same time a man can increase his knowledge of what is graceful, and still further cultivate and refine his mind, so much the better, and this is just what *vers de société* enable him to do. But the uses of this art do not stop at relaxation; it is valuable also both for exercise and education. There is no better means of keeping the mind elastic and ready for action than its cultivation, which requires quickness of apprehension, lightness of touch, and steadiness of hand and head. Nor are its services to literature and language to be lightly regarded, especially in respect to the art of versification and the use of words. To young poets its discipline is valuable, as allowing no laxity of rhyme or rhythm, or any license, poetical or other; both to them and writers of prose, as demanding the expression of what is meant in the fewest and best words. Neither can we consider contemptible, from a moral point of view, an art which requires such a thorough subjection of self and its powers to the dictates of decency and human-kindliness. To use satire without spite, humour without coarseness, wit without either license or profanity, to curb fancy by truth, and speculation by sense, are a few of the moral lessons which are taught with severity in the modern school of *vers de société*.

W. COSMO MONKHOUSE.

## MR. MILL'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND MR. FITZJAMES STEPHEN ON "LIBERTY."

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If a writer of autobiography reveals more about himself than he intends (and he must be far too self-conscious if he does not), the critics of an autobiography also uncover themselves in ways which they little dream of. True, when this shuttlecock sort of comment has gone its round and exhausted itself, the outcome is simply that we are all imperfect creatures, and that onlookers may see things that players miss, in the heat of the game,—true ; but, after all, an autobiographical book of so pronounced a character as Mr. Mill's volume, dealing so much, too, with questions that divide schools and parties, does seem to serve as an unusually active and serviceable kind of litmus paper. In some literary quarters, and I have no doubt whatever in the large majority of minds, there is a total disregard of the avowed purposes of the author, and of the essential character of his work ; the result being, of course, an unfair estimate. In one instance, we find, I think, a little haste on the side of a partisan. In that able and courageous paper the *Examiner*, a lady correspondent takes the *Saturday Review* of 1st November to task for "ungenerous depreciation," and for hinting that Mrs. Mill "never wrote anything." The writer then refers to the famous article by Mrs. Mill, published first in the *Westminster* and then in the *Dissertations* as a proof of the *Saturday Reviewer's* ignorance. But (though I am going fully to accept Mr. Mill's estimate of his wife), unless my memory fails me, Mr. Mill has spoken of that essay in such terms as to suggest to all but amateurs, that his share of the work as "amanuensis" (I think he uses that word) scarcely stopped at what the word exactly implies. But whether my recollection is right or wrong, I must candidly say that this article in the *Saturday Review* impressed me rather favourably. It is easy to read between the lines and find indirect "depreciation" there ; but the writer of the article was evidently putting considerable restraint upon himself all the way through, and the general result seems to me a tolerably fair one,—not adequate ; that is another matter,—and not free from error by any means. The chief point that struck me disagreeably was the (surely !) pedantic remark that Mr. Mill's knowledge of Greek was never that of the perfect scholar. This was certainly going rather far a-field to say something nasty. Mr. Mill is under the mould, and of what moment is his Greek scholarship, even considered with reference to his father's plan of education ? Besides, considering the immense range of Mr. Mill's

faculties and that omnivorous apprehensiveness which belongs to every such mind, a man's right to criticise his scholarship ought to be very clear indeed. This question of scholarship in general is indeed one upon which much pedantry is always ready to come to the front. A man of the quality of Mr. Mill, or even of far lower quality, may not carry about him much of the small change of scholarship, Greek or other, and thus he may at a moment's notice be made to look small by a fellow of the quality, say, of Dr. Parr; when all the while, if the two men were fairly pitted against each other on the special point, the *general* mastery of the bigger of the two would, even on that point, blow the other out of the water in five minutes. The blunder is, as if it were said of a great statesman that he never attained the rank of a perfect administrator, because he didn't know, off-hand, what was paid for the last door-mat purchased in Downing Street.

To quote myself (on some former occasion) it is hard to determine, when silence has once been wrongly broken on a subject, whether the remedy is to be more speech or a return to silence. But, surely, it was indiscreet in another critic to refer to Mr. Mill's silence about his mother. He must have had his reasons—and who knows what they were? Or rather let me put it,—who has a *right* to know what they were? I might have guessed, and I, in fact, did guess as I read, that James Mill was a man who resolutely sat down upon everybody else in the household. Now James Mill has been well before the world for scores of years, and his son has frankly put him in front more than once; but, as all our guessing might be wrong, had we not better leave the matter alone? If anybody knows, privately, facts about the Mill household, it in no way alters the case: for he has not therefore any right to make a public use of his knowledge—a point too often forgotten by reviewers and other publicists when they allow their behind-scenes knowledge or suspicion to colour their foot-light comments upon others or their books.

One of the most obviously true—and fertile—of the criticisms is that the autobiography discloses an *unexpectedly* “plentiful lack” of humour on Mr. Mill's part. I have faint suspicions that even here he may have a little misrepresented himself. At any rate, plenty of men of the same rank have wanted humour. Shelley said the reform of the world would never get on till laughter was put down, and most reformers have, to use Milton's phrase, wrapped their talent of sport in a napkin, if they have had such a talent. Unfortunately, the criticism in this case goes much deeper than the (Goldsmith) inability to swallow the kitchen poker—it points to false, or at least partial, estimates of many of the great facts of life. Mr. John Mill's grave condemnation of Mr. James Mill's un-Malthusian conduct certainly overthrew all my seriousness: “più non vi leggemmo avanti.” To see a philosopher pitching into his own father for begetting him

brothers and sisters, put me in mind of Sir Walter Scott's reply—unquoteable, but gloriously human and worthy of Sterne at his best—to the publisher who wanted him to do an expurgated Dryden. I fairly roared, and laid down the book. It is difficult to give any plain reason why Mr. Mill, thinking as he did, should not write thus and thus; but it shows that there was a screw loose in his experience of life or his culture. These are very curious matters. We turn with blank amazement from Godwin when he publishes Mary Wollstonecraft's letters to her former lover; but Godwin is all the while as simple-hearted over it as a baby—he only wonders at *our* wonder, if, indeed, he goes so far as to observe it. We can't be all alike; we must bear and forbear.

Not less irrelevant than the remarks upon the absence of all mention by Mr. Mill of his mother, are those which refer to his almost total silence about his brothers and sisters. For why should he mention them? The "Autobiography" is avowedly a propagandist book, a history of opinion and personal culture; and family matters are outside of its scope, to say nothing of the positive good reasons there might be for saying nothing about them. If I were to write an autobiographical book, I should think it very hard—and very ridiculous—in a total stranger to take upon himself to express surprise at my leaving out my first cousin, my uncle, my aunt, or any one else whom I chose, for my own reasons, to omit. The question for the outsider must be—Is this book truth-like, and does it fulfil its *own* intention? If any book in the world is entitled to assume this condition, it is an autobiography.

In order to vary the page, let us break the connection a very little, and take up one or two other matters in which certain reviewers are clearly in the wrong. In the *Saturday* we find this:—

"About the age of thirty-five, as he records with perfect confidence in the soundness of his judgment, Mr. Mill withdrew from the limited intercourse with society which he had previously cultivated. No more erroneous proposition has ever been enunciated than the assertion that 'a person of high intellect should never go into unintellectual society unless he can enter it as an apostle.' Again, 'If the character is formed and the mind made up on the few cardinal points of human opinion, agreement of conviction and feeling on these has been felt in all times to be an essential requisite of anything worthy of the name of friendship in a really earnest mind.' A man who will neither enter unintellectual society nor consort with any one who differs from him in opinion, practises an unconscious self-indulgence analogous to the care of a valetudinarian for freedom from disturbance and for an equable temperature. In precisely the same spirit, religious bigots and other leaders of cliques and coteries confine themselves to the society of those who echo or share their opinions. From the date of his voluntary seclusion Mr. Mill lived in



the closest union with a companion who, among other qualities, agreed in all his opinions so completely that he supposed himself to be guided by her judgment. To be never doubted and never contradicted is for the wisest of men more pleasant than wholesome."

Now, first about the voluntary self-seclusion of the class of persons whom Mr. Mill rather inadequately and unfortunately classifies as "intellectual." If we read this term as referring to those who *understand* or who have *vision*, it is not so bad; for those who have vision will have high and pure aims. The description is awkward—as the event proves. But, read the passage fairly, and you at once perceive that it is no more than has been laid down as law for the prophet or idealistic reformer time out of mind. You may find it in the Bible, in Plato, in Schiller, in Carlyle, in Emerson, in Goethe, in Milton, in probably every "prophetic" writer that ever lived. Where two or three are gathered together, says Shelley, there is the devil in the midst of them. What is the excuse which Renan makes for his Jesus? That it is impossible to mix with the multitude and not lower the pitch of one's own faith and self-respect. In all ages and all climes, poets, artists, and philosophers have been compelled to "wall in the sacred fire;" some of them over larger tracts of their lives, some over smaller. Some of them have withdrawn for a time even from their own wives, and their wives have loved them none the less. As for Mr. Mill, he had seen plenty of society in his time. True, it had been too much of one kind, but it does not appear that he was to blame for that—his first duty was to his own soul, and most loyally he fulfilled that duty. He had a *sufficient* number of intimates and acquaintances all through life; a wife whom he adored; and *plenty of work to do, which work he did*. It seems rather hard to preach sermons now, for his daughter-in-law to read, about his studious and self-respecting mode of life.

If, however, anybody wants to see the doctrine that friendship in the strong sense can only exist between those who are agreed in "cardinal points," he cannot do better than turn to Mr. Fitzjames Stephen's chapter on "Fraternity." There, especially at pages 257 and 284, he will find the proposition which the *Saturday* disputes, put as strongly—I was going to say, as harshly—as human pen could well put it.

What the *Saturday* has to say of Mr. Mill's wife and her always agreeing with him, is worse than all. No man of brains ever loved a woman of brains (and nobody has suggested that Mrs. Mill was not at least a woman of high and bright intelligence) because she agreed with him. And in the present case we find Mr. Mill telling us over and over again that his wife disagreed with him so far as to be in some most vital particulars his teacher as well as his friend. The differences of opinion between them were at first considerable, and to the last the wife exercised the functions of a critic towards all that

the husband wrote. As for general knowledge of the world and aptitude to uncover social secrets, no writer has more strongly than Mr. Mill confirmed me in the long-standing opinion that men of the world are apt to think a great deal too much of what they gain (as well as too little of what they lose) by the terms on which they carry on their lives. It is not by loafing about and using the eyes like gimlets to pierce through nine-inch bricks that you will get to know most even of "the world." It is by practising such an amount of reserve as shall keep the mirror of the mind unsullied that you get to know things.

*There is something wrong with every man of faculty who has not learnt or got near to learning this important practical truth.*

No doubt a "man of the world," in the usual sense, would be quicker to extricate himself from, say, a street-row, or to gain an argumentative victory in the smoking-room, where the conditions of the discussion were (as they always are in mixed society) absolutely false; but even here Mr. Mill had a surprise for us. Nothing ever startled me more than the manner in which his speeches and answers to questions "brought down the house" at public meetings when he was first a candidate for Westminster. There was, of course, no clap-trap about them,—they were, indeed, curt and bare; and yet they told upon mixed audiences of very imperfect intelligence.

After all, too, is there any proof that Mr. Mill's withdrawal from general society was anything like what it should have been in order to justify the sort of comment that has been made upon it? All the facts at my command point the other way. That he did not in the least allow mere difference of opinion to forbid or abate friendship (intelligence and fine character being presupposed) is abundantly proved. If I had leisure to mould or put in order all the material my own bare memory could collect on these matters from my scanty reading, I could make out an overwhelming case; and, even if the reader will only follow me in a chance quotation or two, he will see how wide of the mark are these criticisms of the *Saturday*. First, let us take what Mr. Mill himself says of his friendship with Sterling:—

"With Sterling I soon became very intimate, and was more attached to him than I have ever been to any other man. He was, indeed, one of the most loveable of men. His frank, cordial, affectionate, and expansive character; a love of truth alike conspicuous in the highest things and the humblest; a generous and ardent nature which threw itself with impetuosity into the opinions it adopted, but was as eager to do justice to the doctrines and the men it was opposed to as to make war on what it thought their errors; and an equal devotion to the two cardinal points of Liberty and Duty, formed a combination of qualities as attractive to me as to all others who knew him as well as I did. With his open mind

and heart, he found no difficulty in joining hands with me across the gulf which as yet divided our opinions. He told me how he and others had looked upon me (from hearsay information) as a 'made' or manufactured man, having had a certain impress of opinion stamped on me which I could only reproduce; and what a change took place in his feelings when he found, in the discussion on Wordsworth and Byron, that Wordsworth, and all which that name implies, belonged to me as much as to him and his friends. The failure of his health soon scattered all his plans of life, and compelled him to live at a distance from London, so that, after the first year or two of our acquaintance, we only saw each other at distant intervals. But (as he said himself in one of his letters to Carlyle) when we did meet it was like brothers."

This, by itself, speaks volumes, but there is plenty more. Many will have been glad to note the friendly way in which Mr. Mill speaks of Mr. William Maccall. In the latter gentleman's deeply interesting magazine, *The People* (No. 27, July 3, 1852), is the following note prefixed to one of a series of letters from Sterling to Maccall:—

"Early in March, 1842, I was in London for a week or two. Sterling gave me notes for Mr. Thomas Carlyle and Mr. John Stuart Mill. That to Mr. Mill I presented, and have since had *much pleasant and profitable commune* with one of the clearest of thinkers and most lucid of writers."

Now, what was Mr. Maccall? (he can scarcely be changed *now*.) A red-hot, shaggy, rampagious mystic,—the most red-hot speaker and writer that ever came under my notice. My worst enemy has never accused me of wanting fire, but I used to feel it almost a sultry thing to hear Maccall lecture on a hot Sunday morning. Take two sentences (Mr. Maccall's sentences are often as long as the Anaconda snake, and he rarely condescends to make a fresh paragraph at all) from a lecture on the "Unity of the Individual":—

"It would be ridiculous and no less presumptuous to measure and to estimate the works of God, especially the noblest work of all—Man,—by the hard, dry, mechanical utilitarianism, which by the side of Mammon and conventionalism is quickly ascending into one of the most revolting despotisms of the day . . . . . I protest in the name of Nature, in the name of Him who is the light and the life of Nature, and whose everlasting laws and benignant providence cannot be mocked and nullified by the pedantries of Sciolists; I protest against this mean and huckstering mode of judging the capacities and satisfying the requirements of Humanity."

Does it look, from this, as if Mr. Maccall was the sort of man to have "much pleasant and profitable commune" with Mr. Mill? Yet we learn from himself that he had, and Mr. Mill's words tend to confirm it.

Take again the testimony of Mr. W. T. Thornton, an Anti-Utilitarian

in moral science, and the political economist who corrected the wage-fund theory. In the *Examiner* of May 17, we have this :—

"It is little to say that my own friendship with him was, from first to last, never once ruffled by difference or misunderstanding of any kind. Differences of opinion we had in abundance, but my open avowal of them was always recognised by him as one of the strongest proofs of respect, and served to cement instead of weakening our attachment. The nearest approach made, throughout our intercourse, to anything of an unpleasant character was about the time of his retirement from the India House. Talking over that one day with two or three of my colleagues, I said it would not do to let Mill go without receiving some permanently visible token of our regard. The motion was no sooner made than it was carried by acclamation. Every member of the *Examiner's* Office—for we jealously insisted on confining the affair to ourselves—came tendering his subscription, scarcely waiting to be asked ; in half-an-hour's time some 50*l.* or 60*l.*—I forget the exact sum—was collected—which in due course was invested in a superb silver inkstand, designed by our friend Digby Wyatt, and manufactured by Messrs. Elkington. Before it was ready, however, an unexpected trouble arose. In some way or other, Mill had got wind of our proceeding, and, coming to me in consequence, began almost to upbraid me as its originator. I had never before seen him so angry. He hated all such demonstrations, he said, and was quite resolved not to be made the subject of them. He was sure they were not altogether genuine or spontaneous. There were always several persons who took part in them, merely because they did not like to refuse—and, in short, whatever we might do, he would have none of it. In vain I represented how eagerly everybody, without exception, had come forward ; that we had now gone too far to recede ; that if he would not take the inkstand we should be utterly at a loss what to do with it, and that I myself should be in a specially embarrassing position. Mill was not to be moved. This was a question of principle, and on principle he could not give way. There was nothing left therefore, but resort to a species of force. I arranged with Messrs. Elkington that our little testimonial should be taken down to Mr. Mill's house at Blackheath by one of their men, who, after leaving it with the servant, should hurry away without waiting for an answer. This plan succeeded, but I have always suspected, though she never told me so, that its success was mainly due to Miss Helen Taylor's good offices. But for her, the inkstand would almost certainly have been returned,\* instead of being promoted, as it eventually was, to a place of honour in her own and her father's drawing-room."

The story of the inkstand is so characteristic of Mr. Mill,—so strongly illustrative of that love of spontaneity or truthfulness which

\* No, Mr. Thornton, no ! Mr. Mill was, surely, a gentleman !

is the everlasting hobby of my own pen and which attracts me more than any other moral quality, that I should gladly retain it for my own sake, even if the reader would not, as he will, thank me for it. To Mr. Thornton's testimony is appended a note by Mr. Fox Bourne, which is as follows :—

"I may be permitted here, without Mr. Thornton's knowledge, to recall a remark made by Mr. Mill only a few weeks go. We were speaking of Mr. Thornton's recently published '*Old-Fashioned Ethics and Common-Sense Metaphysics*,' when I remarked on Mr. Mill's wide divergence from most of the views contained in it. 'Yes,' he replied, 'it is pleasant to find *something* on which to differ from Thornton.' Mr. Mill's prompt recognition of the importance of Mr. Thornton's refutation of the wage-fund theory, is only one out of numberless instances of his peculiar magnanimity."

Following this comes a tribute by Mr. Herbert Spencer, tracing Mr. Mill's so-called errors of policy to 'an almost romantic generosity,' and adding the following personal record :—

"Some seven years ago, after bearing as long as was possible the continued losses entailed on me by the publication of the *System of Philosophy*, I notified to the subscribers that I should be obliged to cease at the close of the volume then in progress. Shortly after the issue of this announcement I received from Mr. Mill a letter, in which, after expressions of regret, and after naming a plan which he wished to prosecute for reimbursing me, he went on to say :—'In the next place . . . what I propose is, that you should write the next of your treatises, and that I should guarantee the publisher against loss, *i. e.* should engage, after such length of time as may be agreed on, to make good any deficiency that may occur, not exceeding a given sum, that sum being such as the publisher may think sufficient to secure him.' Now, though these arrangements were of kinds that I could not bring myself to yield to, they none the less profoundly impressed me with Mr. Mill's nobility of feeling, and his anxiety to further what he regarded as a beneficial end. Such proposals would have been remarkable, even had there been entire agreement of opinion. But they were the more remarkable as being made by him under the consciousness that there existed between us certain fundamental differences, openly avowed. I had, both directly and by implication, combated that form of the experiential theory of human knowledge which characterizes Mr. Mill's philosophy ; in upholding Realism, I had opposed in decided ways, those metaphysical systems to which his own Idealism was closely allied ; and we had long carried on a controversy respecting the test of truth, in which I had similarly attacked Mr. Mill's positions in an outspoken manner. That under such circumstances he should have volunteered his aid, and urged it upon me, as he did, on the ground that it would not imply any personal obligation, proved in him a very exceptional generosity.

"Quite recently I have seen afresh illustrated this fine trait—this ability to bear, with unruffled temper and without any diminution of kindly feeling, the publicly-expressed antagonism of a friend. The last evening I spent at his house was in the company of another invited guest, who, originally agreeing with him entirely on certain disputed questions, had some fortnight previously displayed his change of view—nay, had publicly criticised some of Mr. Mill's positions in a very undisguised manner. Evidently, along with his own unswerving allegiance to truth, there was in Mr. Mill an unusual power of appreciating in others a like conscientiousness; and so of suppressing any feeling of irritation produced by difference—suppressing it not in appearance only, but in reality; and that, too, under the most trying circumstances."

These things do not look as if Mr. Mill was impatient of difference of opinion, or apt to regulate his friendships by any sentiment of the kind. As to his intellectual magnanimity, let us just recall a fact which certainly was a great surprise to me. In his book on Sir William Hamilton, Mr. Mill showed that he had seriously misunderstood Mr. Spencer. I was much astonished at this; but while the matter was so to speak yet damp from the press, a printed slip was appended by Mr. Mill to his book, candidly confessing that he had in truth for the moment confounded the idea of primary truth with that of *intuitive* truth—adding, however, that he thought both conceptions open to the same destructive criticism from his own side (I quote from remote memory and very hasty reading). Now, mean persons may say that Mr. Mill could not have helped admitting this passing mistake—and that in terms; but this cuts both ways, for it implies that to make the confession must have cost something, even to a man who could so well afford to acknowledge an error; and it was acknowledged openly, decidedly, and promptly,—though there were many other ways of doing it.

Before we pass on, those who may fancy from a certain chilliness of tone, which is not rare with Mr. Spencer, that he is not a particularly good judge of what is "romantic generosity" and what is not,—should be reminded of the Mr. Spencer who sent one of the very earliest indignant guineas to the fund for Dr. Hessel. The name of the philosopher was at the top of the first column of published names in the *Daily News*.

But in truth, to return to Mr. Mill, it is a great mistake to impute aridity and want of feeling to a man because he is clear-headed and can stand to his guns for a hard-featured (not necessarily hard-hearted) principle of action. We have it under the hand and seal of no less emotional and lyrical a man than Robert Burns that he considered the pathetic old ballad of Burd Helen "silly, even to contemptibility." Perhaps the reader will at first wonder why I mention this here. But the reason is not very obscure or I hope

far-fetched. If Mr. Mill had made this criticism, would it not have been considered a proof of emotional and artistic ineptitude,—such as no one would impute to Burns, though he did make the criticism? Such things may well put us on our guard. Perhaps this little paper may happen to be read by a gentleman who some years ago remarked to me, at a dinner-party, that he thought Mr. Mill's occasional use of musical topics and illustrations affected and pedantic; the half-pretences of a man who was really deficient on the emotive and artistic side. Partly from my entire faith in Mr. Mill's truthfulness and directness, partly from what such musical and critical instinct as I happen to possess told me, I met my friend's opinion with a decided negative. Now what have we all learnt since Mr. Mill's death, and what do we gather from the *Autobiography*? His friends tell us that he could and did improvise well upon the piano, and he himself records that when yet a child he composed, to songs of Sir Walter Scott's, airs which he could recall in late maturity. We know, now, too, how Sterling at first thought Mill a manufactured man, and how he afterwards became convinced that Coleridge and Wordsworth "belonged" in the true sense to Mill as much as to him. It seems to me that (making necessary allowances) Sterling's second thoughts were the true ones, and his friendship with Mill proves it. There is, undoubtedly, a soupçon of aridity in Mr. Mill's way of expressing himself in regions purely or mainly emotive or æsthetic (especially when Religion and the Family are on the carpet); but that this was the super-induced part of him, and not the "grain" of his nature, is, I think, clear. Hence, Mr. Minto, a writer in the number of the *Examiner* (of 17th May), who appears to find something perfunctory, not quite whole-hearted, in Mr. Mill's more poetic studies, is, in my opinion, wrong. When we have allowed for the natural effects of the unhappy training he got from a father with whom the word "intense" was a by-word of scorn, we have remaining a large amount of poetic sensibility and emotional intensity which are evidently original and native to the man. Mr. James Mill went, in educating his eldest son, far beyond the limits of his rights as a father. It is clearly a father's duty not to teach his child what he does not believe himself, but it by no means follows that he is bound or even entitled to teach the child all he *does* believe himself, or to fix beforehand as far as possible the whole form of the child's character. In all education the path of the teacher is a narrow one, and it was scarcely possible for so self-confident and determined a man as James Mill not to err in the direction of doing too much. When we get into our hands what Mr. Mill has to say of Theism, and such matters, we shall be in a better position to judge of the amount of injury which,—whether one speaks now as Christian, Theist, Non-theist, or Manichee,—his character and sensibilities may be supposed to have received in youth. From curiously sugges-



tive passages scattered up and down his writings, I venture, even in the present stage of our knowledge of him, to select one which is really remarkable. It occurs in a footnote by Mr. Mill, on page 296 of vol. ii. of his edition of his father's "Analysis of the Human Mind." It is a portion of the work in which the hardness, bareness, self-sufficiency, inapprehensiveness, and rash decisiveness of James Mill's mind show themselves in such ludicrous colours that it is difficult to read on with patience. Here is one of Mr. John Mill's notes:—

"The elements contributed by association are certainly more predominant in the pleasure of colours than in that of musical sounds; yet *I am convinced that there is a direct element of physical pleasure in colours, anterior to association. My own memory recalls to me the intense and mysterious delight which in early childhood I had in the colours of certain flowers; a delight far exceeding any I am now capable of receiving from colour of any description, with all its acquired associations. And this was the case at far too early an age, and with habits of observation far too little developed, to make any of the subtler combinations of form and proportion a source of much pleasure to me.* This last pleasure was acquired very gradually, and did not, until after the commencement of manhood, attain any considerable height. The examples quoted from Alison do not prove" [no, I should think not] "that there is no original beauty in colours, but only that the feeling of it is capable, as no one doubts that it is capable, of being overpowered by extraneous associations. Whether there is any similar organic basis of the pleasure derived from form, so far at least as this depends on proportion, I would not undertake to decide." [I will undertake;—there is.] "The susceptibility to the physical pleasures produced by colours and musical sounds, (and by forms if any part of the pleasure they afford is physical), is probably" [!] "extremely different in different organisations. In natures in which any one of these susceptibilities is originally faint, more will depend on association. The extreme sensibility of this part of our constitution to small and obvious influences, makes it certain that the sources of the feelings of beauty and deformity must be, to a material extent, different in different individuals."

It is surely all but impossible for a thinking man of fair *variety* of susceptibility and knowledge to recall without a kind of resentment that James Mill had the *entire* moulding of a mind like that from which the above paragraph emanated. And here I venture to remark that Mr. John Mill is quite in error in supposing that his father's procedure was never cram. His own admissions clearly prove that it often was,—not in its intention but in its working, which was nearly as bad. The *Spectator* rightly said that the *Autobiography* is in many respects a "melancholy" book. It is indeed melancholy to think of the little boy whose father began to

cram Greek down his poor little throat at three years old, being walked forth by his merciless Blimber in the Green Lanes, trying to pause upon the "mysterious and intense" pleasure he got out of a blush rose, a foxglove, a bluebell, or a clump of yellow gorse, and then being sat down upon by his father's "discourses" about major and minor premisses, or the agrarian laws in Rome,—certain "severities" which Mr. Mill, even in advanced life, does not like to speak of, being all the while held before him. True, he says all this did not prevent his childhood from being a happy one; but then he has let us into the secret that his ideas of happiness were of a very chastened order. It is a hard thing to say, especially remembering the beautiful attachment that existed between him and his wife and daughter-in-law; but it is true that Mr. Mill could never have known the *abyssal* fountains of enjoyment, or learnt the lessons of passion in the tropical sense. But the defect was more in his training than in his nature.

The dullest reader fixes at once upon one point as to which Mr. Mill's correctness of judgment goes utterly to the wall. He relates the most astounding course of education that ever risked turning a child into an idiot; he tells you of his own extraordinary acquirements as coolly as if he were relating feats in the play-ground; and then he winds up by saying that in the quality of the faculties thus far concerned he was rather below than over the average, and that other children could do the same or better, if the teaching were as good. The *Saturday Review* very naturally and properly inquires if Mr. Mill ever had any experience of children, after he was a man; and I would, myself, give a great deal to know all about *that*. But the case does not stop here. From the directness with which Mr. Mill criticizes his father in some cases, we may infer that had he seen the *real* evil in his father's general system as applied to himself, he would have mentioned it. He has, then, we conclude, failed to perceive *how* his education was eminently calculated to injure him. Nothing could be more mad than to encourage a boy to form opinions on serious questions of history and human conduct before he could by any possibility have acquired the elementary experience or developed the elementary sensibilities that ought to form a large part of his intellectual and moral capital for life.\* And Mr. Mill never lost his liability to go too fast and too far ahead of his own emotional experience. In reading some of what he has written upon the population question, the reader—though, like myself, read up in the facts and the speculations, and cherishing none of the usual prejudices upon the subject—cannot but exclaim, "Ah, Mr. Mill! if I could have played special providence to you for five years of your life, what a difference I should have made both in your opinions and your

\* Pages 138 to 152 come tantalisingly near to seizing the true point; but they miss it.

methods of propagandism in these matters !” When one reads in the “Political Economy” those sentences about Sismondi and his wife, their domestic happiness, and the duty of a human pair to have no more children than would replace them when dead—one feels a spiteful wish to have it in one’s power to break the heart of theorists of this kind. In fact to say, “Very good ; you shall have two children, boy and girl ; they shall be the light of your lives, the idols of your hearts, the centre of your hopes for the world in the future. And just when your wife is fifty years old they shall both die.” Unfortunately, this is no argument. And if I were to say that there is no branch of speculation, whether as matter of biology or political economy, in which there has been such astounding haste, and rashness of induction upon slender bases, as that which relates to the increase of the human family and the “laws” which are supposed to regulate that increase,—the accredited experts would only sniff the air, without even deigning to say, What do you know about it? One comfort,—any contempt which they might feel for me could not exceed that which I feel for such speculations as some of their own number have been recently indulging in as to improving the human “breed.”

The reader has already noticed that the present writer accepts to the full Mr. Mill’s estimate of his wife. Unless there had been a politely kept-down tendency to make game of it in certain quarters, I should feel it impertinent to say even as much as that. But, in truth, there is nothing unnatural or unlikely or beyond the experience of intelligent men, in the idea of a woman of almost divine genius, with no tendency to exercise her gifts through the ordinary channels. Many a man of large faculties might find himself puzzled to express, much more to explain or justify, an estimate of a woman which he felt rightly sure was well founded, and which he also felt was proved by what she had been to him, and reflexly, through him, to the world. Let me quote here an anecdote about Wordsworth and his wife which Harriet Martineau gives in the notice of De Quincey, published in her “Biographical Sketches” :—

“While so many anecdotes are going of Wordsworth’s fireside, the following ought to be added. An old friend was talking with him by that fireside, and mentioned De Quincey’s magazine articles. Wordsworth begged to be spared any accounts of them, saying that the man had long since passed away from the family life and mind ; and he did not wish to ruffle himself in a useless way about a misbehaviour which could not be remedied. The friend acquiesced, saying, ‘Well, I will tell you only one thing that he says, and then we will talk of other things. He says your wife is too good for you.’ The old poet’s dim eyes lighted up instantly, and he started from his seat, and flung himself against the mantelpiece, with his back to the fire, as he cried, with loud enthusiasm, ‘And that’s true ! There

he is right !' and his disgust and contempt for the traitor were visibly moderated."

What can we say to this ? Wordsworth was a sane, clear-headed man ; and I submit that we can only take his word, given in this form and in his poetry, that his wife really was this "divine thing." While the pen is pausing in my hand, the subject takes a form and colour, and branches off in ways which forbid me to continue it here in this occasional manner. But we must never forget that in Mr. Mill's case we have the noble lady's daughter to speak, in a sense, for her mother. She, too, has written but little (and what of it ?), but nobody who has read her attentively will be surprised at the language which her father-in-law applies to her in three or four passages of the Autobiography. Miss Helen Taylor's modesty has led her to break up those passages by the use of asterisks, but we can partly fill in the blanks for ourselves. And if we almost flinch from expressing a fervent hope that she will write more, and continue the tradition which her father-in-law's death breaks off for a while, it is only because we would not be so rude as to dictate, ever so remotely, a path to those finer spirits which so perfectly feel and see their own way.

One of the things said by Mr. Mill about his wife will strongly arrest the attention of those who think, as the present writer has always done, that the transformed Utilitarianism of Mr. Mill was Transcendentalism speaking a new dialect. He says the lady was quick to distinguish between *mala prohibita* and *mala in se*. Having put down the words, he catches himself up with a "that is," and puts his own meaning upon the phrases. But it is too late. No Experimentalist or Utilitarian can make out his right to the distinction in any shape between *mala in se* and *mala prohibita*. To have but let the words fall is (we "transcendental" fellows think) fatal, and final. There is another instance in this volume in which Mr. Mill seems suddenly to wake up to the idea that he is, to say the least, skating on thin ice. It is in the account he gives of the fit of depression which came over him in the midst of his early career. If all his aims as a reformer of mankind were to be accomplished tomorrow, would that make him happy ? His heart says, No. This is only the first step in an obvious procession of thought, of the final bearing of which Mr. Mill betrays a sudden consciousness by telling us with marked emphasis that he still believed, as firmly as ever, in Utility as the moral criterion. Here the ice seems to me as near breaking under the performer's feet as in that startling passage in the essay on "Utilitarianism" in which the essayist goes in for a hierarchy of pleasures with the astounding practical corollary that in case of dispute as to the precedence of one of two pleasures those who have tasted both are to decide, or, in case of difference of opinion, the majority of them.

I cannot forbear putting side by side with all this, a passage from another writer:—

"If a man persists to inquire why he ought to promote the happiness of mankind, he demands a mathematical or metaphysical reason for a moral action. The absurdity of this scepticism is more apparent, but not less real than the exacting a moral reason for a mathematical or metaphysical fact. If any person should refuse to admit that all the radii of a circle are of equal length, or that human actions are necessarily determined by motives, until it could be proved that these radii and these actions uniformly tended to the production of the greatest general good, who would not wonder at the unreasonable and capricious association of his ideas?"

When Shelley wrote thus in his "Speculations on Morals," he actually called himself a Utilitarian, though in the previous chapter he had laid down in form the postulates of what most persons call Intuitional Morality.

A word must be said concerning Mr. Mill's account of his parliamentary career. I agree with the *Spectator* that this is a little egotistical, and Mr. Herbert Spencer himself says that in his latter years Mr. Mill was ageing fast; whilst either he or some kindred reminiscent adds that the conversation of this great and good man had latterly taken a retrospective turn. But if ever a man was provoked by gross unfairness to egotism, it was Mr. Mill in this case. Looked at simple-heartedly, his short parliamentary career seems to me to have been one of the very finest things on record of any public man. Yet it was continually being snapped and yelped at by one cur or another; and it was harshly, if not a little enviously, criticised by many who were not curs at all. It was a relief when it came to an end, not because it was not up to the mark, but because it was a case of casting pearls before swine. In this posthumous piece of self-justification there may be something abated of Mr. Mill's usual dignity, but more shame to those who stung him into the error—not for their exercising the right of criticism, but for the baseness of moral tone which they displayed.

As I am compelled even to omit much of my material relating directly to the "Autobiography," I must put off the short examination of Mr. Fitzjames Stephen's "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" which it was my design to attempt in this little article. Almost everybody who is likely to have read the preceding paragraphs is likely to know that the doctrine of Mr. Mill's "Liberty" is mine too. Mr. Stephen has not, in my opinion, answered that magnificent book, or even caught its argument. But his vigorous and often eloquent and affecting discussions bring into strong relief what I also believe—namely that the doctrine of "Liberty" cannot be finally established upon a merely Utilitarian basis. It has often escaped my pen that Mr. Mill in that book and in the "Subjection of Women"

is found assuming data for which no form of Experimentalism has room. Mr. Stephen puts this in a strong light, and we on the other side are much obliged to him. But the real question remains untouched. Let us take it as it is briefly put in Mr. Samuel Bailey's essay on the Publication of Opinions :—

"We cannot discover a standard of truth in the opinions of the majority of mankind, otherwise we might ascertain all truth by the simple process of counting votes. The majority of mankind are seldom free from error; they have often held opinions the most absurd, and at different times have entertained contradictory propositions. It would be equally vain to look for a standard of truth in the judgments of any particular class of human beings. No rank, no office, no privileges, no attainments in wisdom or science, can be a security from error. Bodies of men, who have assumed infallibility, have, hitherto, always been mistaken. Since, then, we have no fixed standard by which we can in all cases try the validity of opinions, as we can measure time and space; since we have no oracles of indisputable authenticity, or at least of incontrovertible meaning; since we cannot ascertain truth by putting opinions to the vote, nor by an appeal to any class or order of men, how are we to attain it, or by what means escape from error?"

Now Mr. Bailey is, in my opinion, a more consistent Utilitarian than Mr. Mill in his way of treating these questions, and he makes out for liberty in the publication of opinions a case which I should have been glad indeed to see Mr. Stephen attack. But, then, the point arises :—Every act, considered as a subject of moral criticism, may be treated as involving a moral dictum,—in other words, an opinion. So then, the Utilitarian argument which is good for Opinion is good for Action. Or, if not, why not? It would of course be from mere malice that I should put the question thus; but how could Mr. Bailey dodge it without shunting back, or how could he answer it on the rails he has laid down without leaping his engine and train into a gulf?

One word more. Any dislike which the more soft-hearted among us may feel of James Mill's aridity of nature must not prevent our gratefully acknowledging the earnest conscientiousness of his method with his son. If other fathers were as bent upon their children's "escaping not only the corrupting influence which boys exercise over boys, but the contagion of vulgar modes of thought and feeling" (page 35), we should have a very much better world. There are always plenty of parents to carry on the traditions of vulgarity and corruption in education. What we want is a little more of James Mill's heroism, even at the cost of blunders as sad as his.

HENRY HOLBEACH.

## MR. CARINGTON.

### CHAPTER XXXIX.

#### ROLLO.

*Astrologos.* He has come back again, you see. I knew he would.  
One of these nights the drowsy-eyed astronomer,  
Watching the stars in an enormous speculum,  
Will start to see the missing Pleiad back again.

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

THERE entered a tall man, light-haired, bright-eyed, loosely built, carelessly dressed, looking as if he had no fear or care in the world. Two of our party scrutinized him curiously as he walked easily across the Hall, looking as though it belonged to him; those two were the Marchesa and Mr. Carington. Before he had time to speak, little Raffaella had sprung from her chair, and caught him in a tight embrace, exclaiming,—

“Leo!”

Leo quietly extricated himself, passed his hand over Raffaella's hair, and then spoke,—

“I am rather perplexed; I wished to see Lord Delamere, but find he has retired. Perhaps the best thing I can do is to retire also, and return at a more seasonable time.”

“Certainly not,” said Mr. Carington, rising and coming close to him, and drawing him aside. “Why, Rollo, how is it you are not drowned? You were drowned in the papers some years ago, and have no right at all to come to life again. Are you quite sure you are my dear old Rollo? It seems hard to think there could be anybody so wonderfully like him.”

“O, I am Rollo Delamere,” he said, tossing back his long locks of hair. “They said I was drowned: O that was years ago; I did not care to contradict them. I have been wandering all over the world.”

“Yes; then I was not mistaken, I saw you in Bond Street the other day,” interrupted Carington.

“Ah, likely enough. Well, here I am. Introduce me and give me some supper. I suppose my venerable father has retired for the night.”

“He has,” said Mr. Carington, “but he will be devilish glad to see you to-morrow, old fellow. As to introducing you, you seem to know the Marchesa Ravioli as well as I do. The other lady will perhaps be rather startled when I introduce you; therefore, if you will come away with me for a few minutes, I will tell you who she is, and I will then prepare her for an introduction to you.”

“Who can she be!” said Rollo, as he walked out of the Hall with Mr. Carington.



This conversation had been carried on out of hearing of Frank, and Elinor, and the Marchesa. They had been anxiously watching the stranger, and wondering when there would be an introduction.

"Who can he be?" said Elinor. "I have never heard of a Mr. Delamere visiting here. What a fine fellow he is!"

"Oh! he is not Mr. Delamere, he is my Leo," said the Marchesa. "I am quite safe now he has come. He is such a strong brave fellow."

"I think I know who he is," said Frank, "for I heard Mr. Carington address him by his Christian name. And it is curious that I happened to travel in the carriage with him to Carlisle. You must expect another surprise, Elinor; for I think this is a relation of yours who was supposed to be dead."

"A relation of mine! How many more relations am I going to discover suddenly? But what can he be? Is he my brother? I did not know that I ever had one."

"No, you never had a brother, Elinor," said Frank.

"How do you know?"

"I have heard your history to-day, and intended relating all to you, but we have had so much to talk about, that I have not had time yet. Do you know of any relation that was supposed to be drowned?"

"Yes; I have heard that my father was drowned, but this cannot be my father; he is too young."

"O, suppose it is!" said the Marchesa, "what fun it will be that my Leo should be your father!"

At this moment Carington walked into the Hall alone. Elinor did not give him time to speak, but ran up to him, and said,—

"Is it my father, Mr. Carington?"

"Yes, child; how did you know it?"

"Frank guessed it. May I see him?"

Carington left the hall, and returned with Rollo, saying gravely,—

"Miss Delamere . . . Lord Rookwood."

"What a wonderful fellow you are, Carington! I had quite forgotten I was Lord Rookwood, by courtesy. And pray who is this charming Miss Delamere?"

The stalwart stranger was holding Elinor's hands and looking into her eyes.

"If you don't know your own daughter, Rollo, it's your own fault," said Mr. Carington; "I can vouch for her, since she has been under my care from her birth."

"This is my daughter, is she? She does *you* credit, Carington, at any rate. I have to thank you for the pleasantest surprise you could have given me. What is your name, my child?"

"Elinor," she said, with tears in her beautiful eyes. Frank Noel thought he had never seen anything so lovely, as this tall graceful girl looking up wonderingly into her father's face. Rollo sitting on the chair from which she had risen, drew her caressingly towards him, and put his arm around her, and said,—

"Are you glad to find you have a father, Elinor?"

"I am, indeed," she said.

"I must introduce Mr. Frank Noel to you, Rookwood," said Mr. Carington. "He is my godson, and aspires to be your son-in-law. The Earl has consented: perhaps you will be more difficult."

"Mr. Noel and I were travelling companions from London to Carlisle," said Rollo, "and a very pleasant companion I found him."

"I listened very well," said Frank, with a smile.

Rollo laughed till the great hall rang again.

"I did do most of the talking, I believe," he said. "As to you and my Elinor, Mr. Noel, it seems to me that I have no right to say a word. While I have been wandering all over the face of the earth, like a certain gentleman mentioned in the Book of Job, my dear friend Carington has made her what she is, partly for my sake, partly for her mother's."

"More than either for her own," said Mr. Carington, and Elinor gave him a grateful smile.

"So," continued Lord Rookwood, "if the Earl approves, and Carington approves, that is enough."

"No, it isn't, papa," said Elinor. "You must approve too. I am too proud of my father, to let him give up his authority over me. So, Frank," she went on, looking over her shoulder at her lover, "you will have to ask papa."

"I am forgetting hospitality," said Mr. Carington. "What will you have in the way of supper, Rollo? I am obliged to act for the Earl when he is in his rooms."

"Something devilled," he said. "By the way, my man, old Wolf, is somewhere outside: he may as well come in here, for he is more my comrade than my servant."

Orders were given. The gaunt old man, with a travelling bag in one hand, and his master's lion-skin over his arm, entered the hall. Two or three mastiffs and bloodhounds came round him, sniffing at the skins.

"Dogs hate cats," said Rollo, "and know a catskin when they see it. Of all cats the lion is, I think, the cowardliest. I can quite believe the stories of Hercules and Samson killing lions unarmed. A giant negro in mid-Africa was surprised by a lion: he thrust his hands into the brute's mouth, and positively pulled out his tongue, and the creature ran howling away, leaving him with only a few ribs broken."

"O, don't tell horrid stories, Leo," cried Raffaella. "Come, we are quite a cosy party. Let us enjoy ourselves, we five: tell adventures, if you like, but let them be love-adventures."

"I never had one in all my wanderings," he said. "The nearest thing was when you and I met at Venice: do you remember that moonlight night, when we were in a gondola together, and you sang delicious little songs that you made at the moment, words and air and all. Do you remember?"

His fine tenor voice became more musical as he recited :—

"No clouds have we but two or three  
That dance around the moon ;  
Our skiff flies fair through summer air  
Across the blue lagoon.

"Light ripples float around our boat,  
And glancing moonbeams play ;  
O when the night is sweet, soft, bright,  
It never should be day."

"Fancy your remembering my nonsense," said the little lady in white, evidently well pleased. "Ah, it *was* pleasant in Venice. Was it not ?"

"It is pleasant here," said Rollo, rising to walk to a table in the next angle where supper was served. The news that it was for the Earl's long-lost son, had somehow reached the kitchen—what news does not ?—and Rachette had come out of his private room, throwing aside his favourite Balzac, to do something piquant and unique. Very pleasant was the aroma from the silver dishes when the covers were removed. "Now, old dog," said Rollo to his faithful retainer, "you and I have eaten many meals together in many queer places : come and eat your first meal with me in my father's house."

Master and servant sat down together ; Elinor and Raffaella came to wait upon them and serve their wine. Mr. Carington and Frank looked on with amusement.

"This is fine old Madeira, Carington," said Rollo : "but in a house like this, I'll swear there's old ale. Gods, how I longed for a draught of old ale when I was on the Arizona mountains !"

An obsequious footman had heard the remark, and came with a quart silver tankard foaming at the brim, saying,—

"This is the very hold hale, your lordship."

Rollo laughed. He raised the great tankard to his lips and drank the whole at a draught, to the amazement of everybody except Wolf, who nodded his head sideways, like some quaint old bird, when the ale had vanished. Then looking up at Elinor, who had just helped him to something eatable, he said,—

"Ditto for Wolf, please, Miss."

"What *does* he mean, papa ?" she said.

"Why that he'd like some of the *hold hale*," said Rollo, in a musical whisper. "Wine's lost upon Wolf, unless you give it him in a small cask."

Wolf was furnished with what he desired. Supper over, Rollo sprang up like a giant refreshed, and said,—

"Now, Carington, as I know you are not tired—in fact, I don't think you ever knew what it is to be tired—shall we have a chat ? If one of the footmen will show Wolf my room, he'll make things

ready for me. Your godson and my daughter can go into a corner and prattle; Raffaella can go to bed, but I want a good talk with you before seeing my father to-morrow."

"I am not going to bed yet," said the Marchesa. "Mr. Noel and Elinor can come and talk in my room: then you will be comfortable, I hope, you selfish Leo."

He lifted her by the waist like a child, and put her on his shoulder.

"Now," he said, "shall I carry you to bed, or will you go quietly?"

"You strong monster!" cried Raffaella, when she found herself on the floor. "Good-night, I am afraid of you."

"Good-night, papa," said Elinor; and as he kissed her, how thankful she felt that her father was not lost to her! Poor child! she had never felt the unutterable loneliness of some orphans, who are left on the hands of splenetic uncles and tartaric aunts, or are immured within the walls of charitable institutions. She had always had Mr. Carington for a friend: and how true and wise a friend he always was! But lo, now there had come to her an accession of riches: a lover, a grandfather, a father! She had yet to hear the whole story, and it was very soon told her: but she had no natural inquisitiveness, and waited patiently.

The loss of a father in childhood is one of the deepest misfortunes that can occur. Up to a certain age children want the mother's guidance: but when they are on the verge of manhood and womanhood, it is the father's wider experience, and stronger control, that is urgently needed. Nothing can make up for the absence of this. Mr. Browning makes Mildred in *The Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, say,

"I had

No mother—God forgot me—so I fell."

But, with due deference to the great authority of that illustrious poet, I hold that the presence of a wise father (or of such an elder brother as Thorold) is even a stronger safeguard against such a fall.

Elinor almost forgot her happy love in this last happiness caused by her father's return. She could not sleep for delight. Rollo's strangely musical voice rang in his daughter's ears; when at last she slept it mingled with her dreams, as the chimes of a cathedral haunt the visions of one who sleeps within earshot of them. And when she awoke in the morning, the voice still spoke to her; and when she went to the window, she saw her father and her lover and Mr. Carington climbing the fell in the golden March sunshine.

A long long talk had Mr. Carington and Rollo, after the others had gone: so long that the great wood-fire was dying, and the sunlight was invading the hall windows, when they went to bed. For Rollo

told his friend the whole story of his wild wanderings, too long a story to be told here : and Carington listened quietly, always amused, and sometimes amazed.

"I have been a fool, Frank," said Rollo, "but I think the folly has been pretty well crushed out of me. Gods ! when I was the other side of the world, how I longed to see England ! How I longed for oaks and elms, for primroses and violets—for a good glass of ale ! My dear Carington, I positively longed for bread and butter, a thing which I never eat if I can help it. And then I wanted to see this old place. I had never seen it ; but there was a picture of it in an old book about English country houses ; and I used to dream, when I was camping out in wild places, or sleeping in a sailing boat, while old Wolf steered, of being at home here, and seeing my father again. What will he say to me, Frank ?"

"He will be delighted to see you. He, like you, has improved with years. I came here to fight Elinor's battle ; I was resolved to make him acknowledge her : the main difficulty was, that he had an illegitimate daughter of his own here, a very nice girl, whom I was quite sorry to get sent away. She is his only memorial of the days when he was a parson."

"She is provided for, of course."

"O, yes. And she is a very good girl. At present she is with her mother, but I intend to look after her by-and-by, when events more important are settled. By the way, the Marchesa Ravioli says you are a conspirator : is that true ?"

"Only an amateur. I have been drawn into one or two plots, but when I found they meant assassination I gave it up, and tried to make Raffaella do the same. But she went on—for *fun*, she used to say."

"Foolish child ! I made rather a startling stroke when I took her out of town the other day." And Mr. Carington told the story.

"Delightful !" laughed Rollo. "And what did Number One say, I wonder ?"

"He is in a terrible fright, I hear, from one cause and another. I should think he must be the unhappiest man on the earth's surface."

"He is the meanest," said Rollo. "How odd you should have seen me in Bond Street—or Brook Street, was it ? I had been to have my hair cut at Truefitt's ; it was about twice as long as it is now. The fellow looked thunderstruck, and thought Absalom had come to life again. By the way, I went down to Warwick when I came home, and heard of poor Theresa's death, . . . and that you had taken charge of the child. I did not go near the Bullivant family, but got my information from an old man at Lord Leicester's Hospital. But he did not know whether the child was boy or girl."

"You might have looked me up before now, Rollo," said Mr. Carington.

"I distrusted myself," he replied. "I was afraid my old roving restless disposition might return, and that I might fly off suddenly without being able to check myself. So I thought it best to wait awhile, and try if I was really cured, before taking my place in society. I think I am pretty sane now: I don't care to wander any more: if my father can tolerate me, I should like to stay here and take care of him. And now tell me of Frank Noel."

"Frank is a good fellow, slow but full of power, with about a thousand a year of his own. He was quite frightened when he found he had been making love to the heiress of the Delameres. Your return will be a relief to him; for you will be sure to marry again and to have a son; then he will be free to do what he wants, that is, to turn farmer."

"Don't you think I'm too old to look for a bride?" said Rollo, running his fingers through his magnificent long beard of silvery amber.

"Not a whit. You *must* marry. You may have your pick among the heiresses and beauties of England. You are in the prime of life, healthy and handsome, heir to an ancient earldom and a princely property. If you were known to be in London, you would be literally hunted down by tender mothers, anxious for the temporal welfare of their daughters. You are not safe, even here, the moment your arrival is known. Look out for the worst, my dear Rollo."

"Look out for the best, I should think you mean. To tell truth, Frank, I do not object to marrying again. If Elinor were not going to run away, I should not have thought of it; but as she is, I fancy the best thing I can do is to try and find somebody. What say you?"

"I say yes. You have plenty of choice; princesses of the blood royal excepted, you may throw your handkerchief where you like."

"Are Englishwomen so sordid?" said Rollo.

"It is not that they are so sordid; but a lady of high birth does not care to marry beneath her. This limits her range of choice. Enters on the arena a handsome fellow, not too young nor too old, heir to an ancient peerage, and to a rent-roll of a quarter million. Can she resist?"

"I suppose that's what people call love now-a-days. Well, I married once to spite you, old fellow; now I must marry to fulfil the duties of my station. I think I had better advertise."

"I think we had better go to bed," said Mr. Carington—for sleepy housemaids with long-handled brushes were entering the Hall.

That morning, four or five hours later, Elinor saw the three gentlemen ascending the fell. They came in to breakfast with ruddy complexions and immense appetites; Rachette had gone in for superb combinations of *rogons*, *homards*, *pigeonneaux*, *huitres*, in honour of Lord Rookwood; but Rollo breakfasted on a mighty junk of Canterbury brawn, and a tankard of his favourite ale.

"About my father, Carington," he said, presently, standing with his back to the fire, and holding his quart tankard in his hand. "I suppose you had better see him first and prepare him for the return of the Prodigal son."

"Perhaps it is best," said Mr. Carington. "It shall be just as you like. The Earl is not easily frightened."

At this moment Elinor gave a slight start: looking up, Rollo saw his father before him, white-haired, bent from his fine old stateliness, leaning on his ivory-handled staff, with an imperishable fire in his eyes. Father and son looked at each other across the breakfast table for a moment.

"It is very strange," said the Earl, slowly. "I dreamt last night that Rollo had come back: and *you . . . are . . . Rollo.*"

"I am Rollo, father," he said, coming round the table and taking his father's hand. "I am that scapegrace. I have wandered all over the world, and am home at Delamere at last. Am I welcome?"

"I always believed you would come, Rollo," said the Earl. "I knew you weren't drowned. Of late years I have looked up expecting to see you every time a door opened. Yes, my dear boy, I welcome you . . . and here is your daughter, who welcomes you too. Don't you, Elinor?"

Elinor could scarcely speak. The meeting between her father and her father's father seemed to her so strange and wonderful and beautiful an event. It came upon her, after her long orphanhood, as an almost intolerable joy.

"Rollo," said the Earl, "if you have breakfasted, come and tell me your story. You will find me terribly troublesome. You remind me of my own youth: but you are better and stronger than I ever was."

The Earl and his son left the Hall, stalwart Rollo supporting his father, and seeming to communicate new life to the old man. That was the notion passing through Mr. Carington's brain: he said,

"Rollo will give his father another ten years of life, at least."

"Do you think so?" said Elinor.

"I do indeed. You will help, you know, my child. But the Earl will now be able to have his immense estates well managed without trouble to himself: and he will see in Rollo a second self, in the prime of life, ready for anything. Your father will marry again, Elinor. He will give you a stepmother."

"He ought to marry," said Frank Noel, "for his own sake and mine. It is his duty to produce an Earl of Delamere."

"How do you know Elinor does not want to be Countess of Delamere?" asked Mr. Carington.

"She would rather buy a farm with old Matt Noel's twenty thousand pounds, which are her property. She wants to milk cows and make cream and put morellas in brandy, as she used on that famous old Devonshire farm. She would rather be a farmer's wife than a Countess, wouldn't you, Elinor?"



"I would indeed," she said.

The Marchesa threw up her hands in sheer amazement.

"Ah, but I would rather be the Countess," she said. "I do not understand this fancy. Give me a great Hall, like this . . . equipages, horses, grooms, maids, diamonds, ah! and lace . . . if I sold my soul to the Prince of Darkness, it would be to have the loveliest lace in the world. Now, to be a farmer's wife!—O Elinor! It is dreadful to think of. But I have always said it: you English are all mad. The rich want to be poor and the poor want to be rich: and you like paying taxes, and foggy weather and beer. To think of my Leo emptying that enormous metal vessel filled with beer. I will never speak to him again, never, never."

"Different people have different ideas, Raffaella, dear," said Mr. Carington. "You would make a charming Countess: so would Elinor. But my Elinor has simpler tastes, and thinks Devonshire cream better than confectioners' ices, and would rather milk a cow than flirt with a fool. I am not going to decide between two ladies. The first fellow on record who decided between ladies paid pretty dearly for it."

"And who was he?"

"Paris. He had three to deal with. They all undressed that he might decide."

"How shocking you are, Frank," said the Marchesa. "Don't talk in that way before a little girl like Elinor."

"To be sure," said Mr. Carington. "Thank you, Raffaella. Elinor, consider yourself sent back to the nursery. But now for a serious topic, how do you like your father?"

Elinor did not at once reply. In a few moments she said:—

"He is *strong*."

"I know what you mean," said Mr. Carington. "It is his character in three words. The eccentricities of his youth were the result of uncontrolled strength. As a boy, he flogged his schoolmaster. He has been wearing out his strength upon wild rough adventure for the last twenty years. He has almost weakened himself down to the average, but not quite. His father and his daughter must keep him in order now."

"We will try," said Elinor. "But what grand power he would have, if there were fighting to be done. I defy a soldier to flinch, with my father at the front of battle."

"You look like Joan of Arc yourself," said Frank Noel. "If the French invade England, you will be leading a brigade of *califourchon* Amazons."

"The French will not invade England or any other country during this century," said Mr. Carington. "I don't know what is to become of the French. I am interested in their future, because they grow several wines that I like. On the other hand, they grow a great number of ideas that I don't like. Ideas are more important than wines."

"The French are rather proud of producing ideas," said Frank Noel.

"Self-delusion, hallucination, humbug," said Mr. Carington. "A noble idea can no more be born among the French than a white baby among negroes. They are good at mathematics and memoirs. Their language is incapable of carrying poetry. A nation that cannot, by the nature of things, produce a poet, must be in bad case. The great mistake the French people have made, is this; they were born to buy and sell, and they fancy they were born to fight. Now I would back Frank Noel, there, to put to death any two Frenchmen who attacked him."

"They don't seem to know much about boxing and wrestling, sir," says Frank, "from what I hear. But they are good fencers."

"Weak in the wrist, Frank," says Mr. Carington. "But come, what shall we do this morning? On an irregular and exciting day like this, everybody feels restless. The Earl and his son will be shut up together all the morning. Suppose we go up to that little haunted tarn on the fell side, and tell the servants to bring up luncheon and some rugs for the ladies. That will be a nice lazy way of spending the morning. We are all unquiescent, effervescent, incandescent: I can see by Frank's eyes that he would like to put on the gloves with somebody: and as to Raffaella, she reminds one of my old friend Luttrell's verse,

'Methinks the Furies with their snakes,  
Or Venus with her zone might gird her;  
Of fiend and goddess she partakes,  
And looks at once both Love and Murder.'

Come, shall we walk off our restlessness?"

It was agreed. They clomb the fell side. They reached the mystic tarn and picnicked there. It was intensely pleasant. The March wind had blown itself to sleep, and in the delicious sun-shiny lull there was faint fragrance of April's violets in the air. And the Marchesa sang . . . she couldn't help it . . .

"O wonderful wild world of ours!  
O spring's soft breath!  
O coming kisses—coming flowers—  
And coming death!"

"The flower's a fruit, the kiss a boy,  
The maid a wife—  
And sorrow is the root of joy,  
And death is life."

"I'll ask Rollo to throw you into the mere if you sing such melancholy songs," said Mr. Carington.

"I don't call that at all melancholy," said Elinor.

## CHAPTER XL.

## FORD'S FARM.

*Raphael.* My Alouette, where shall we spend our honeymoon?

*Alouette.* In the old cottage by the haunted waterfall,  
Where the spring violets were always earliest,  
Clusters of scented snow, and where miraculous  
Rainbows were mirrored in the shattered rivulet.

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

THE Earl of Delamere and Rollo cronied so completely, to use a schoolboy's word, that Elinor saw very little of her father except at dinner, and during the evening. It is not recorded that she complained: somehow or other she and Frank Noel were all-sufficient for each other: and as an early spring had come upon the Land of Lakes, they enjoyed their wooing out of doors, and made a merry time of it. Frank felt satisfied now: his Elinor would not be a countess, he was sure: they might live the quiet life which would arride them both. For neither had any ambition or restlessness: they were curiously alike in loving tranquillity, the country, the beauty and friendliness of nature, all things innocent and calm. Hence it was really a relief to both to find the burden of a peerage and great estates removed from them for a time, if not altogether. Rollo, Lord Rookwood, everybody could see had Herculean shoulders that would bear an Empire: he relieved his father with as little effort as it cost the demigod to relieve poor weary old Atlas. Stewards and bailiffs and gamekeepers found they had to wake up when Lord Rookwood's quick eye was on them, when he told them his commands in that voice of marvellous music: his unfatigable energy gave life to everybody, and the change in the state of affairs was astonishing. Rollo took work easily; did as much in an hour as any other man would have achieved in a day; never turned a hair, but was ready for his dinner and his ale, and an after dinner flirtation with Raffaella. Mr. Carington was herewith delighted—he had made up his mind that these two would suit admirably. Raffaella needed a master and Rollo wanted a toy.

One day after dinner he lazily stretched himself in his chair by the fire, like one of the Delamere mastiffs, and gave a mighty laugh which rang to the roof of the hall.

"Why, papa," said Elinor, who was sitting on a stool at his feet, "what *are* you laughing at?"

"At my own thoughts, Nell, and they were about you and Frank. The Earl and I have been talking gravely about you, this morning. He thinks it is high time you were married: I agree with him. Come, fix the day, and let us decide whom to invite."

Elinor pinched her troublesome progenitor, who pulled her pretty little shell of an ear, and said,

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, let the debate commence."

"The sooner the better, for Elinor and me," said Frank, gaily. "We are ready to fight the battle of life, as some fellows say, somewhere. I should like to get my dear old uncle the Canon to come and marry us, if he is well enough."

"I'll go and fetch him," said Mr. Carington. "But now I have a point to mention which perhaps you may think premature. Where are these two children to live, Rollo?"

"Egad, of that I never thought. Here, if they like; it is big enough, this old house, and my father and I don't want to be left alone in it. Or if not, we have two or three other houses. There is a charming place near Glastonbury, I find, with a real ghost. It has been let to a stockbroker, but the ghost has been too much for him, and he wants to go."

"Ah, but Frank wants to farm, don't you, Frank?"

"Yes," said Frank, who by this time had got so remarkably close to Elinor that the mischievous Marchesa could not help pelting them with ratafias and sugar-plums from the dessert, which missiles Frank quietly devoured. "Yes, I mean farming: it is what I am most fit for."

"Do you remember Ford's Farm, Elinor?" asked Mr. Carington.

"Do I not?" she said. "I always thought it the loveliest place in the world. I wonder whether I should think so now. Such dear quaint old-fashioned rooms and gardens—such a lovely sea and sands. Now that is where I should like to live."

Rollo rolled forth thunderous music of laughter.

"My daughter a farmer's wife!" he exclaimed; "you would soon get tired, Nell."

"No, Papa, I have tried it and liked it. I can milk a cow beautifully. When you come and see us you shall have *such* cream."

"It is an odd coincidence," said Mr. Carington, "that only a few months ago I bought Ford's Farm. The man who succeeded to it on Miss Ford's death was a bad manager, and had a large family: and when he got into difficulties he wrote to me for advice. I advised him to emigrate, which he did: and I bought the farm, having always liked the old place since my little Elinor ran about it. Now, Frank, you may have it, if you like, for the price I gave: and I believe it is undervalued, though I gave the poor fellow exactly what he asked. I think he was so eager to escape from his difficulties that he named too low a price: but I am no judge of such things, so perhaps it is the other way."

Elinor was delighted.

"O Mr. Carington!" she said, "this is the most charming thing you could have suggested. Frank, we must go there. And we'll spend our honeymoon in putting things straight. Let us buy it directly."

"I think you are remarkably well suited," said Rollo. "Now there is nothing left except to fix the wedding day. *Settlements*, some people would say, but the Earl won't hear of it: settlements and trusts

and the like, he says, were meant to worry honest people and bring money to the lawyers : he'll make Elinor a present on her wedding day, and she can pass it on to her husband if she likes. I cordially agree with my father."

"Ah," said the Marchesa, in a tone that seemed a sigh, "but for the complications of family property, I should not for so many years have been miserable."

"Never mind, Raffaella, you are happy now," said Mr. Carington.

"No, I am not."

"Why not?" asked Rollo.

"Why not? Shall I sing you why not? Come."

She ran to the piano and made a brilliant chaos of musical noise. She sang—

"How can I be happy, when  
Each minute that swiftly flies  
Finds me and leaves me lonely?  
When the crowd of women and men  
Pass on, and no one cries—  
'It is you I love, you only.'

"The girl is happy, whose eyes  
Have eyes that were born their twins,  
To make her heart beat faster.  
The girl is happy, who flies  
Into the woods, and wins  
A kiss from her wooer and master.

"O for the velvet turf!  
O for the summer sun!  
For the fairy ferns that flutter!  
For the song of the silver surf!  
For the word that only one—  
One in the world can utter!"

"I call that an uncommonly pretty little song, Raffaella," said Rollo, "and you shall be appropriately rewarded."

Whereupon he kissed the little improvisatrice, and she called him a tyrannical monster. She invented a new name for him daily, and he took them in the best of humours.

The talk of this evening led to farther talk : and finally it was arranged that Frank and Elinor should be married on the first of June. About the beginning of May, Mr. Carington caused the stalwart roan stallion to be saddled, and took leave of his friends for a week. He told Rollo to console the Earl, and the Marchesa to console Rollo : he left Frank and Elinor to their own devices, fully aware that they would not know whether he was in the house or out of it. He rode off on a joyous May morning, and passed the first evening at the King's Arms, Lancaster, unhaunted by the ghosts that disturbed the idle and industrious apprentices. He rode

right away down through Manchester, Matlock (its tors green with spring), Derby, Nottingham, and Leicester, to Warwick, where he made a few inquiries about the Bullivant family, and lunched with the Earl. Thence through Buckingham to Oxford, his old university, where he stopped a day or two with an old friend, a Fellow of Maudlin, who had been digging up Greek roots and drinking port wine all his life, and who now regretted that he had never married.

"That's about the only thing I don't regret," said Mr. Carington.

At Wallingford he turned westward, and made his way to Bath, where in old days he had seen some sharp hunting in Pulteney Street. Days wholly past; Bath is an innocent city. Mr. Carington found it deadly dull, and pursued his westward way through Bristol and Exeter till he reached Kingsbridge and Ford's Farm.

He had put in a respectable man and his wife as managers. Everything was shipshape. The old books and old furniture that Elinor knew in her childhood were there still. But Mr. Carington had decided to brighten the place a little: so, when passing through Exeter, he had desired an upholsterer of that city to come down and take his orders. The tradesman was intelligent: and Ford's Farm was eventually made ready to receive Elinor in quite its old style, but freshened and filled with colour. Some days Mr. Carington spent here, arranging everything, and especially desirous that there should be horses for Frank to ride, and red Devon kine for Elinor to milk. Then he rode homeward through North Devon, as far as Ilfracombe, cutting across country thence to drowsy Wells and legendary Glastonbury. At a village in that vale of Avalon he made pause, with the object of finding Lucy Walter. A charming sleepy village, buried in apple trees that might have been coeval with King Arthur, and that were now drowned in those pink and white blossoms that even Mr. Millais cannot quite imitate. A few houses, pargeted and gabled; an inn, the Delamere Arms; a pretty little girl in rustic dress sitting in a little garden, by a little cottage porch, all looking like picture rather than reality. She was knitting, or something of the kind: the sunlight fell lovingly through apple leafage on her unkerchief curls.

Down the village street walks the stately roan, with a rider who looks young till you observe his face. Mr. Carington always looks young on horseback. He is of the type of Cheiron the centaur. When he leaps into the saddle it invigorates him; gives him youth again; gives him power. One of those few men is he who make their horse a part of themselves: who in return for his strength and speed, give the creature they bestride their brain. The meaning of the great Centaur legend lies in this.

Lucy would not have been Lucy if the unusual sound of horses' hoofs in this somnolent village of Avalon had not caused her to raise her eyes from her knitting. Lucy would not have been Lucy if she had not run down the garden path as fast as her pretty feet could

carry her, when she saw the cavalier dismount at the wicket gate, and leave his horse standing in the road.

"O Mr. Carington," she cried, with tears in her eyes, "how glad I am to see you! How is Lord Delamere?"

"Much better. I am down here on some business for him, so I thought I would look in upon you and see if you were happy. Are you?"

"O yes," she said. "It is very quiet, and I should like to see Lord Delamere again; but I really am happy, Mr. Carington."

"You did not know of course, Lucy," said Mr. Carington, "that the Earl had a son, who was supposed to be drowned at sea. He has returned home safely, and that of course has made Lord Delamere much happier."

"O how glad I am!" said Lucy. "But when do you think he will let me see him again?"

"Be patient, my child," said Mr. Carington, "I will take care that you are not forgotten."

Mr. Carington rode across through Castle Cary to Salisbury: it was late in the evening, so he entered the archway of the White Hart, and gave careful orders about his horse, and then thought of himself. At dinner he asked the waiter how Canon Lovelace was.

"O, the old gentleman is quite well again now, sir, and goes down to the Cathedral two or three times a-week. But Mr. Pinniger, sir, will be in the billiard room presently, and he can tell you, because he sees the Canon almost every day."

Mr. Carington had in his time seen nearly enough of billiards, a game which can only be successfully played by men of small brain: however, he decided to see Pinniger, and so lounged into the White Hart billiard-room at about ten. The lawyer was there, but not playing. Mr. Carington's first introduction to him had been as a baby in long clothes, and he never could see him without remembering that he had desperately attempted to choke himself by swallowing a receipt for a quarter's rent.

"Mr. Carington," exclaimed Pinniger, when he saw him, "you are indeed welcome to our dull city. Do you stay long?"

"Only a day or two. I hear the Canon is better."

"O, he is well. He only wants something to enliven him. If he could see Frank, now."

"Do you think he is well enough to travel?"

"I think, and the doctor thinks, that change would do him good."

"Well, I am here to try and persuade him to make a change. Frank is going to be married to Lord Delamere's granddaughter on the first of June: we want the Canon to come and perform the ceremony. Couldn't you bring him up to Delamere, and stay a few days. We don't want you as a lawyer, for when somebody talked of settlements, the Earl said, 'Damn settlements!'"



"I quite agree with his lordship," said Pinniger. "Settlements are intended for the nutrition of lawyers."

"Well, will you come? And there's a young parson who was a great crony of Frank's: do you think he would come and help the Canon. The Earl will make all Frank's friends welcome. He is uncommonly fond of him. Of course you know that he and Frank's father were great friends, and that he killed Captain Noel in a duel."

"I remember something about it," said the lawyer.

"I was there," said Mr. Carington. "Now you must decide to come, and bring Frank's other friend. Can't you induce him to look in upon me here to-morrow? I shall not go to see the Canon till nearly noon."

"I will try," said the lawyer.

"Those twenty bank notes were a famous find," said Mr. Carington.

"Were they not?" said Pinniger. "Do you know, I have never said a word about them in Salisbury or elsewhere, except to the bankers; but I should like to do so one of these days, that people might know what a fine old fellow Matthew Noel was."

"It should be done, and shall," said Mr. Carington. "What did the Bank of England people think of those notes?"

"O, it was a comedy! I took them to town myself. I bank with Drummonds, so I went there first, told them as much as I thought necessary of the affair, and got one of their chief men to go down with me to the Bank of England. When I got there I went to the proper department, shoved in my bundle of notes, requested change in gold. The Clerk at the Counter lost his head at once, and after a feeble attempt to say nothing particular, sent for the Inspector of Notes. That functionary beamed upon us benignantly, and requested our presence in a private room.

"These notes are rather peculiar," he said.

"Notes of the Bank of England," I replied. "Promises to pay which cannot be evaded without an act of bankruptcy. I am Pinniger, Town Clerk of Sarum: this gentleman, from Drummonds, can identify me: all I want is change for twenty thousand-pound notes."

"Perhaps you will not object to say how they came into your possession," says he.

"For two reasons I object," was my answer. "One, that you have not the slightest right to ask; the other, that I should be guilty of a breach of confidence between attorney and client. You have no right to hesitate about paying those notes unless you suspect them to be stolen: do you suspect them to be stolen?"

"I got the money, divulging nothing; it was not a matter of much import, but I have always declined to be trodden upon by official people."

Next morning, before Mr. Carington went out, Basil Longhurst

came with Pinniger to call on him, and willingly accepted the invitation to Delamere, and promised to take the greatest care of Canon Lovelace.

Thereafter Mr. Carington walked into the Close, stooped his head under the old ivy-covered archway, and knocked at the heavy door. He found the Canon happy enough; a mighty Baskerville classic lay on his knees, and he was making minute marginalia. When Laurence announced

“*Mr. Carington!*”

he was at first rather perplexed, his memory having been troubled by illness.

The Canon was a younger man than Mr. Carington: yet he had an air of decrepitude, while the other, erect and alert, looked as if he might be thirty. Mr. Carington grasped Canon Lovelace's extended hand, and said,—

“I have come to persuade you that change of air is good for you.”

“You are very kind,” said the Canon, “but I like this old corner of mine, and don't want to leave it.”

“Ah, but this is a great occasion. Your boy and mine, Frank Noel, is going to marry, you know, and he wants you to do the deed for him. You cannot refuse. You must make acquaintance with Elinor Delamere, before she becomes Elinor Noel. A charming girl, Canon Noel: she is almost a daughter to me.”

“I will go,” said the Canon, “whithersoever it may be. I thanked God for this, when I heard it from Frank. He marries the granddaughter of the man who killed his father. This is well. If I did not love Frank heartily as I do, I should feel it my duty to be with him when such an event happens.”

Mr. Carington rode by easy stages northward, going first through Winchester and Guildford to London, where he wanted to purchase some knick-knacks for the young couple. He did not stay to look in at any of the clubs. He pushed on, through Cambridge and Huntingdon, to where the devil looks over Lincoln; thence to Leeds, in whose prosperous streets the grass grows freely, and across by the old route from Lancaster. Everybody was extremely glad when he walked quietly into the Great Hall, one evening, looking just as if he had been away ten minutes. Elinor and Raffaella both threw themselves upon him in a transport of affection.

“Now, girls, don't smother me,” he said. “Frank, the Canon is coming to marry you. Pinniger and your friend Longhurst are going to bring him. The doctors say that change will do him good. I shall keep him here as long as possible.”

“Have you been to Ford's Farm?” asked Elinor.

“Yes, I have, and everything is in capital form. I shall often come and see you there. I like the old place.”

"The oftener the better," says Frank. "We mean to keep a room for you, and make it just what we think you'll like."

"You're a good boy, Frank, and Elinor's a dear girl. You mean every word you say, you love your old friend, who is the most selfish fellow in existence, and never does anybody a kindness except because it gives him pleasure. But by-and-by you will have a lot of little Franks and Elinors and Toms and Pollys running about, and you will want my room as a nursery, and you will think my old stories and borrowed epigrams lamentably dull after the clever things your children say to the nurse who washes them. Why shouldn't the little rascals say cleverer things than I, since they are fresh from God's hand, while I have had half a century with the devil?"

The wedding-day came at last, and June never found a brighter page in her pretty rose-tinged thirty-paged pamphlet.

Canon Lovelace, assisted by the Rev. Basil Longhurst, performed the ceremony. Rupert Fitz-Rupert was there, good-humouredly submitting to the chaff which his utter defeat brought upon him.

Rachette sent up such a wedding-breakfast as I should say England had never known before. Bridesmaids were plentiful and pretty, all the great families of Westmoreland and Cumberland mustered on this occasion. Superb were the bridal gifts; Mr. Carington especially had exhausted his invention on lovely caprices for his Elinor. When an old bachelor meets a girl who might have been (perhaps ought to have been) his daughter, how he loves her! The beautiful true history of Charles Lamb and Isola is a case in point.

Presents! Well, why enumerate them? The Earl's was very unpretentious; sealed envelope,—

*"For Elinor,*

*"Not to be opened till she gets home."*

Elinor put it in her pocket, and kissed her grandfather and her father and Mr. Carington, and was helped into the carriage by Frank, half crying and half laughing, but quite happy whether she laughed or cried. She had gone through the service and the breakfast in a kind of dream: but as four horses took the omnibus swiftly toward the station, she seemed to awake, and she drew her husband toward her, and said,—

"O Frank! O darling Frank!"

"You are excited, little pet," says old Frank, quietly. "Rest here."

And he nursed her like a baby, and made her cosy all through the long railway journey; for the excitement had fretted her nerves. But when they got into the soft Devon air, and especially when, after a cross-country drive, they reached Ford's Farm, and sniffed the sea, and found a meal of fresh lobsters, and choice tea, and Devonshire cream,

and Carington claret, served in the Red Parlour, they were perfectly refreshed. At this point we may safely leave them. Perhaps however it may be as well to mention that when Elinor deigned to open her grandfather's envelope, it was found to contain a cheque on the Bank of England for 50,000*l*.

Canon Lovelace remained a few days at Delamere, and he and the Earl became very intimate. You would hardly have thought they had any common measure: the Earl was all impulse, the Canon all principle: but both were gentlemen, and that is the truest freemasonry. The perpetual fleet of language is a curious thing: probably no word has in its time had more meanings than the word *gentleman*; will anybody attempt a definition of the current meaning of that variable word?

It was eventide at Delamere. A place is always a little dull after a bridal. Dinner was over. The Earl went off early. The Marchesa said,—

"O! this great hall is so dreary. Come up to my room, Mr. Carington, and let us gossip a little."

They went. Tasso received them with multitudinous barks. Rollo, always athirst, rang for something iced.

"Will they be happy, Raffaella?" says Carington.

"Very," she answered. "He is slow, sweet, strong; he has the best temper in the world, and could be very clever if he tried: but he won't try. As to Elinor, I think she is the finest woman in mind and body, I ever saw."

"Yet she is very quiet," said Mr. Carington.

"Why not? The women who are always chattering are not the best. I talk a great deal too much myself. I often wish I were not so fond of the sound of my own voice."

"Everybody loves the sound of your voice, Raffaella," says Mr. Carington, as he and Rollo take leave.

But Rollo, when Mr. Carington has gone to the quietude of his own room (Carington always stipulates at country houses that nobody shall ever knock at his door), returns to the apartment of Raffaella Ravioli, and coolly opens the door, and sees the little lady sitting before the fire, with bright eyes looking out of white apparel.

"May I come in, Raffaella?"

"Of course you may."

"Have you made up your mind, child?" he said in a voice wherein music and laughter were equally blended—"Come, tell me. Do you think you could marry such a troublesome irregular fellow as I am? Tell me."

"Can't you guess?" said the Marchioness. "Now, Rollo, you are a nuisance with your gravities and suavities. I won't have it. I hate nonsense. You and I are not babies, like Frank and Elinor. Don't pretend you're in love: that's a disease incident to children. You think I shall amuse you, and I know you'll take care of me. Come,

is not that the true state of things? We will marry for fun, and teaze each other dreadfully."

"How pleasant!" quoth Rollo, with a melodious laugh. "Have your way, Raffaella. I think I can keep you in tolerable order, wicked little wretch though you are."

"O, I will give you such a lot of trouble. I will make you wish you had married a slave or remained a bachelor. Come, Rollo, confess you are frightened: I will let you off if you ask me politely."

"I don't mean to be let off," said Rollo, therewith taking her up in his arms like a baby, and administering half a dozen kisses. "Now, you have made up your little mind? Or am I to make it up for you?"

"O do, please, Rollo. I can't take so much trouble. I will do what you tell me, exactly."

"Very well, then we'll say the first of July. And we'll spend our honeymoon in Devonshire, and look up Frank and Elinor, who will be tired of each other by that time: Come, Raffaella, sing me a sentimental song."

*Raffaella.* "With pleasure:

"He said, 'What pretty gay thing  
Will come to my arms for a kiss?  
I sadly want a plaything:  
The toys of my youth I miss.'  
She said, 'I am ready to follow  
Your steps the wide world through,  
But if I'm a plaything, Rollo,  
You'll find me a mistress too.'"

"Ho, ho!" he laughed. "So you are going to be a tyrant, are you, lady of Lilliput? We shall see. We shall see."

## CHAPTER XLI.

### TWELVE YEARS AFTER.

*Raphael.* When you are young, a decade makes a difference.

*Astrologos.* When you are old, a decade makes no difference.

Eighty and ninety I consider synonyms:

I have begun to count my age by centuries.

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

A.D. 1872, 36 Victoriæ. It is a lovely August day. The Earl of Delamere and his wife and son have been for a long ride over the fells. Rollo is Earl now. His father died very quietly, with one hand in his son's, and the other grasping that of his old friend Carington. He had lived a strong life, and he died a brave death.

Rollo and Raffaella have one child only, a boy, whom they have called Frank, uniting the name of his two godfathers. He is as tall as his mother already, and is likely to be taller than his father. He has all his father's daring, and all his mother's wonderful wild wit; and will make a good Earl Delamere in days to come. Frank Noel is delighted at his deliverance.

They ride home under the beautiful soft sunset, that wondrous picture painted for us day after day. They enter the great hall. Rollo finds lying on his table a letter from Carington . . . brief enough.

"DEAR ROLLO,

"I am bored in London. People are growing duller. I shall go down to Frank to-day, and in a week or two I shall travel your way. Look to the wine-cellar, you terrible drinker of ale.

"Yours,

"And Raffaella's,

"F. C."

"I shall be glad to see Carington again," said the Earl.

"Ah, and so shall I," cried the Countess-Marchesa. "If *he* had asked me to marry him, sir, you would never have had a chance. Nobody could refuse Mr. Carington."

"Nobody ever seems to have had an opportunity," said Rollo, laughing as musically as of old. "When Carington asks anybody to marry him, the skies will fall, and we shall catch larks."

Frank Delamere, by courtesy Lord Rookwood, is not spoilt. Papa and mamma both pet him: but papa makes him rough it, and mamma laughs him out of his boyish absurdities. He is such a fine manly fellow at ten, that I expect him to be a young giant of the peerage at twenty. A few young giants are needed in that vicinage. Rollo himself is seldom in London: but now and then his musical voice has been heard in the House, from the Tory benches: and Raffaella's exquisite gaiety and romantic history, made everybody eager for invitations to her brilliant little dinners, especially as Mr. Carington was always there.

On this same summer evening, little Lucy Walter, now Lucy Carnac, is waiting in the porch of that very same Avalon cottage, expecting her husband. There came a railway through those parts, and, with the railway, engineers—one of whom, Ralph Carnac, fell in love with Lucy. Lucy was quite ready to be fallen in love with. They married, Lucy's position being previously explained to the engineer, who did not care twopence about it. Carnac got a good permanent appointment on the line, and Lucy presented him with plenty of children, and they lived very happily.

The old earl had not been illiberal. He got Mr. Carington to see Carnac, and ascertain if he could be trusted with money, and

finding this to be the case, he sent him a cheque for a sum that placed him above poverty. Nor was Lucy forgotten in his will.

Let us travel to the south-west on the self-same day. A soft sweet sultry afternoon lies on Ford's Farm. The great red kine, more than knee-deep in rich green grass, seem too lazy to eat. The pulses of the sea upon the marble sand are languid and slow. The sea-gulls are lazy, floating in air with very little fancy for fish. A troop of children, girls and boys, I don't know how many, are rushing about on the strip of green turf which ends in yellow sand and azure sea. Frank Noel, in the porch of his farm, with velveteen coat and gaitered leg, is smoking a cigar: Elinor, looking quite a matron (but a very pretty matron), is doing some fanciful work. The air is full of odour and music. The youngsters laugh and sing: there is a path of light across the sea; there is not the faintest fragment of a cloud in the whole blue canopy of sky.

"I wonder when we shall see Carington again," said Frank.

"Ah, I wonder," replied Elinor. "I wish he would come."

For Mr. Carington is quite as young as ever. He is even a greater authority in London in social matters than in days gone by. He is the Nestor of the clubs and the Cheiron of the turf. From his verdict there is no appeal. As he rides down St. James' Street, or takes his quiet canter in the Row, you would never dream that he and the century were twins. The pretty little belles of the season, who come out one after the other like monthly roses, are still glad to know that Mr. Carington thinks them nice. His epigrammatic opinion on play, picture, poem, has still its value. The men who cluster in bow-windows of White's and Brooks's are apt to say—

"By Jove, old Carington sits a horse and flirts with a woman and shuts up a fool, as well as he did forty years ago."

When he visits Paris he is well received in the faubourg by his old friend the Duc d'Iviesse, who lives *entre cour et jardin*, and has only one trouble—that the Empire substituted extravagance and ostentation for the science and poetry of aristology—and that to restore them, is harder than to bring back the Count de Chambord.

Let us return to Ford's Farm, where still the children are romping, the master smoking, the mistress knitting, under the sunset light. Suddenly the outer gate is opened with a whip-handle, and in rides Mr. Carington, on a bright chestnut this time. He dismounts, gives Elinor a kiss, grasps Frank's strong hand, is besieged by a troop of youngsters.

"We were just talking of you," said Frank. "You are come to stay, I hope."

"About a week," he said. "Then I am promised to Delamere. I have told him that he must take me when I can manage to come: for I live in the saddle now, and have made up my mind never again to enter a railway carriage. It shakes every fibre of one's body. That



scientific personage, Bessemer, who is going to cure channel steamers of their tendency to give sea-sickness, would do even more good if he could prevent a railway-train from destroying your nerves. I don't care much about it myself. I mean to travel on horseback to the end of my life."

"An admirable resolve," said Frank. "If other people would come to the same determination, we should get a better breed of horseflesh, and fewer railway swindlings and accidents. But come in to supper, my dear Carington: those imps shall be sent to bed: you shall have a salad of fresh lobsters caught by me this day, with Devonshire cream of Elinor's own making instead of oil. I will see that your horse sups well."

"How the time passes!" said Mr. Carington, as he and Frank and Elinor sat late that night, talking about the old days. "I have out-lived so many people, that I begin to think I have lived too long. How faded seems the time when Lady Delamere was a conspirator—when I carried her and Tasso away from Thomas's Hotel, to the dismay of Number One. Lady Delamere is a quiet member of society now: poor little Tasso will never bark again—there is a Lilliputian cross of marble over his tomb in the garden, with the inscription

*Canis Canorus.*

Rollo was as mad as a March hare: now he manages his estates with marvellous regularity, and is Lord Lieutenant of his county, and has a tremendously good reputation. As to Number One, who could paralyze Europe a few years ago, I saw the poor flabby fellow at a railway station the other day. I am amused with his magnificence of exile. If he can't fight, he can 'convey.'"

"Such men," said Frank Noel, "are sure to come to grief in time. Ambition and avarice are the two curses of humanity. I thank God that neither troubles Elinor or me. We have put aside a sinking fund for the young 'uns; we spend the rest quite as much on our neighbours as ourselves. Luckily, we haven't many neighbours!"

"Yours is a happy life, Frank," said Mr. Carington. "You have made a wise choice. There is no occupation more important than to farm the earth. I couldn't do it myself, you know. I *must* have some excitement—and excitement and 'turmut's' don't generally grow in the same field. But when I go back to London, they will ask me at the Travellers' where I have been."

"And what will you say?" asked Elinor.

"Why, to see the happiest couple in England—Frank and Lady Elinor Noel."

